My Memories

BERT O. RUETTIGER

INTRODUCTION

THESE "MEMORIES OF MY LIFE" AS I REMEMBERED THEM, WERE WRITTEN BECAUSE OF A REQUEST BY DAVID, MY FOURTH SON.

IN 1986, ONE DAY HE SAID TO ME INQUIRINGLY, "DAD, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW THINGS WERE WHEN YOU GREW UP?" THEN HE SAID "I'D LOVE TO BE ABLE TO TELL BRYANT AND AUBREY THINGS ABOUT THEIR GRANDFATHER AND HIS FAMILY, HOW THEY LIVED AND WHAT THEY DID."

WHAT A NICE REQUEST. THIS INSPIRED ME TO TRY AND BRUSH AWAY THE COBWEBS FROM MY BRAIN AND PUT DOWN IN WRITING THOSE THINGS- AS I REMEMBERED THEM.

I THOUGHT, TOO, THAT THE OTHER GRANDCHILDREN CHRISTIAN, SUSAN, MARK, ALLEN, RYAN & PATRICK ALONG WITH THE MURPHY GRANDCHILDREN JACK, MEGAN, CAITLYN AND TAMSEN MIGHT ENJOY KNOWING THIS, TOO.

I KNOW THAT THERE ARE MANY THINGS THAT I HAVE FORGOTTEN. BUT I HAVE TRIED TO AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE, TO RELATE IN MY HUMBLE WAY, THESE THINGS AS I REMEMBERED THEM.

I WANT TO THANK ELAINE, JERRY'S WONDERFUL AND LOVING WIFE, FOR TYPING THESE WORDS, THANKS SO MUCH ELAINE.

ALSO A HEARTFELT THANKS TO "MY LOVE" FOR HAVING THE PATIENCE TO LET ME HAVE THE PRECIOUS TIME TO PUT TOGETHER "MY MEMORIES" — THANKS SWEETHEART.

Bert W. Ruethiger

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MA'S PARENTS

Grandma and Grandpa Sievert lived on a forty acre farm in Lockport Township on Roseland Street. When I knew them they both seemed old. Grandpa was a short stocky man and used a cane. He always wore a moustache.

Grandma was a wiry, thin, short woman - very spry. She always wore her hair pulled back, with her hair braided and wound around the back of her head and held in place with long hair pins. They had four daughters. Theresa (my mother) was the oldest, then next in line were Ida, Clara, and Rose.

It was always fun to go to Grandma and Grandpa's house. They had one of these hand-dug wells. You put a pail on the end of a rope, and tossed the open end down first in the well. When the pail was full, you turned a crank and brought the pail of water up to the top. I remember the water was always cold.

Of course, they had an outside privy when you had to go "potty". I remember, too, that they had a flock of geese, and, if one got too near to them, they would hiss and flap their wings and tried to chase you. I was always scared of those geese. Grandma, whenever she butchered one of the geese, used to save their wings and use it to remove dust around and off the furniture.

Grandpa had an old barn where he stored hay for the winter. It was used for and fed to the couple of cows that he had. I remember a lean-to attached to the barn, where he put the cows when he milked them.

I vividly recall that Grandma and Grandpa always came to see my mother on Saturday morning. They would drive over with a horse and

buggy. Pa had a hitching post right next to the house, and Grandpa would tie the horse up to the hitching post so it wouldn't run away.

It seemed they would go to town and sell some eggs, and then buy groceries. I remember these eggs were always in a Quaker Oatmeal carton. Grandma would put oats around the eggs so they wouldn't break.

I used to spend a weekend now and then over at Grandma's. I recall, that on Saturday, Grandma would have Aunt Rose scrub the kitchen floor (the other girls were all married). Aunt Rose had a pail with hot water, a bar of lye soap, and a scrub brush. When she got through scrubbing the floor, it was almost snowy white - it was so clean. Then she would put down newspaper all over the floor, so when one walked over the floor, it wouldn't get dirty.

I really don't remember too much about my grandparents. They both died while I was young. These few things are about all I can recall about John and Rosella Sievert.

PA'S PARENTS

My dad's mother and father had both passed on previous to my being born. I know they both immigrated from Germany and purchased the farm my dad lived on. Other than that, I don't know any more about my dad's parents. Their names were Sebastian and Katherine Seigfried.

THE SIEVERT FAMILY

JOHN SIEVERT - ROSALIA EYRICK

THERESA · IDA · CLARA · ROSE

THERESA SIEVERT – EUGENE RUETTIGER

THE EUGENE A. RUETTIGER FAMILY

LEO SYLVESTER DEWY · LAMBERT · BERNARD · LILLIAN · DANIEL · EILEEN · ELIZEBETH · WALTER

LAMBERT RUETTIGER — PHYLLIS BLOCK

GERALD · LAWRENCE · THOMAS · DAVID · RICHARD

THE RUETTIGER FAMILY

SEBASTIAN RUETTIGER - KATHERINE SIEGFRIED

GEORGE - FRANK - KATE - LOUISE - EUGENE

THE JOHN MURPHY FAMILY

JOHN MURPHY — MARY AGNES WHEELER

THOMAS · KATHLEEN

LAMBERT RUETTIGER - MARY A WHEELER MURPHY

4-2-77

MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD

I remember my mother as a very caring person, a hard worker, one who loved her family, and one who would do anything to make her family happy. We called her "Ma", and our father "Pa".

Pa, too, was a hardworking man. He seemed to be busy constantly. He really never had too much time to spend with his children. I never got to know him until my later years. The only time that I can recall of his spending any time with us was a few evenings (after his work was finished) of playing catch with us.

Our family consisted of seven boys and three girls.

Robert was the first born. He died in infancy. I never knew him.

Leo Gregory was the second born. I remember him well. He was the person we all looked up to. He was a good organizer. As we grew up and into our teens, Leo formed and managed baseball teams. I played shortstop on his team. We called him "Skinny". Later on in life, I became real close to Leo.

Sylvester Louis was born two years after Leo. He had two nicknames, "Fats" and "Dewy". Where he acquired either name is quite obvious. He was heavy-set, hence the kids all called him "Fats". "Dewy" must have come when he was small because of the name Sylvester.

My name, Lambert Oliver, was Ma's fourth child. I had a series of nicknames. I was dark-complected, so I was c alled "Shiner" and "Mex". I was also called "Bam" - why, I don't know. When I went to high school, the kids shortened my name of Lambert and called me

Bert. After my retirement in California, I was known as the "Duke of Minooka".

Bernard Ambrose was the fifth born and two years younger than I. Bernie and I were real close in our growing-up years. I recall that he and I did a lot of wrestling. I think he usually won.

Lillian Rosella was Pa and Ma's first girl and their sixth child. I imagine how proud and happy they both must have been, having a girl after five boys. Lillian became a nun later on in life.

Daniel Oscar was the seventh child. We called him Danny. He was a very agressive lad and a good football player. During his marriage, he fathered fourteen children, seven boys and seven girls.

Eileen Annabell, another girl, and the eighth born. I remember old Doc Steen being there, and Pa telling all the kids to go outside and play.

Elizabeth Charlette, the third girl and the ninth child. Betty was always tiny. She was Ma's first child that was born in the hospital.

Last but not least was Ma and Pa's last child, Walter Roger. Pa was quite a sports nut, so his last child was named after two sports figures. Walter came from Walter Hagen, a great golfer, and Roger from Roger Hornsby, a baseball great.

4A

Jan. 28-68

Dearest Son Lambert

I hope you will forgive me for forgeting about your birthday. After I could not attend the party at Aunt Glaras I forgot about your birthday as I was quite sick but thank the Lord I am quite well now but I think my time will soon be up.

Lovingly

Dad

RUETTIGER
EUGENE A.

Of Route 2, Maple Road, Joliet at Silver Cross Hospital Tuesday, March 9, 1976. Age 91 years. Survived by 6 sons, Leo G., Lambert O. (Bert), Bernard A., Daniel O., Walter R. (Roge) all of Joliet, Sylvester (Dewey) of Lockport, 3 daughters, Sr. Lillian, O.S.F. (Ilene A.), Mrs. Sam Paul, (Elizabeth Betty), Mrs. Louis Juoutras, all of Joliet, 45 grandchildren, 25 great grandchildren, also several nieces and nephews. Born in Joliet, he was a lifelong resident. He farmed for 47 years and later was employed by the Joliet Lumber and Fuel Company. Preceded in death by his wife, Theresa (1955) and 1 son, Robert in infancy, his parents, 2 brothers and 2 sisters. Funeral services will be held from the Carlson Funeral Home, Youngs near Cass Thursday, March 11 at 9 a m. to St. Bernards Catholic Church at 9:30 a.m. Interment, Mt. Olivet Cemetery Charter member and past president of Holy Name Society, St. Vincent DePaul Society, former member of Teamsters Union. Memorials to St. Bernards Catholic Church will be appreciated. Friends may call Wednesday 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m (10)

RUETTIGER, Theresa. — Late of Route 2, Joliet; at St. Joseph's hospital, Thursday, April 7, 1955; age 69 years. Wife of Eugene A. Mother of Leo, Sylvester, Lambert, Bernard, Daniel, Walter; Sister M. Roger O.F.M., Mrs. Sam Paul (Eileen), Mrs. Louis Joutras (Elizabeth); 30 grandchildren; 3 sisters, Mrs. Arthur Mason, Mrs. Julian Bowlan, Mrs. Rose Van Horn, all of Lockport. Funeral from the Danies funeral home, Broadway at Oneida, Monday, April 11th, at 9:00, to St. Bernard's Church at 9:30. Interment Mt. Olivet. Member of the Altar and Rosary society. Friends may call Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 and 7 to 10.

50 YEARS AGO, 1934:

George A. Ruettiger, a Joliet dairyman for more than 40 years, died yesterday at St. Joseph Hospital after a brief illness. Ruettiger, 64, operated a dairy business at 102 Pine St.

OUR LIFE ON THE FARM

The Ruettiger family lived on a 140-acre farm on Maple Road. Maple Road was so-named because of the abundance of maple trees in the area. 80 acres of the farm was in Will County, and 60 acres in Lockport Township. The 60 acres was east of and boarded on Pilcher Park.

The farmhouse was a large two-story home. On the first floor was a big kitchen. In the kitchen was a long oval-shaped table where we sat down to eat. There was also a sink with a hand pump with which we pumped our wash water from a cistern that was beneath the kitchen. I also recall a small table that was by the back door. On this table was a pail that contained our drinking water. This water was pumped and brought in from an outside well. Hanging from the water pail was a dipper from which everyone quenched their thirst.

On the first floor also was the dining room, Ma and Pa's bedroom, and a big parlor. No one was allowed in the parlor except if there was company. Two large doors remained closed and kept it secluded.

Upstairs on the second floor were five bedrooms. One reached the upstairs by going up a long stairway. I remember the stairway having a bannister which my brothers and I would often ride, from the top of the stairs to the bottom.

I recall that one of the rooms upstairs was the room that we kids referred to as the "junk room". This room was the final resting place of old newspapers, Sears Roebuck catalogs, and old rags. I remember, during the fall of the year when we picked the apples from the trees in the orchard, spreading papers on the floor and storing the apples and pears thereon. This

fruit was eaten during the cold winter months.

During the winter, in the dining room, Pa would start up the potbelly stove. It was such fun to stand or sit beside it and warm oneself during those cold winter days. The stove had windows in its door with isinglass in those openings. This isinglass is a non-flammable transparent material where one can see inside to the fire and watch the flames dancing up and down. Out of the top of the stove rises the stovepipe, which has a damper that controls the draft to the fire. When the draft control is open, the fire really burns and roars. To stop this intense burning, one has to shut off this draft, causing the fire to just lie back and burn softly. If the fire burned too fast, the stove often would get red-hot. This would really make Ma nervous.

I remember many times when this would happen. She would herd us kids outside for fear of a fire. There would be sparks shooting out of the chimney, as the accumulated soot would burn. Finally, somehow, it would burn itself out. Ma would then thank God and take us back into the house.

Our kitchen, too, had a wood-burning cookstove. On it, Ma would cook our meals, and in its oven bake home-made bread. I can still see her kneading with her bare hands, the dough that eventually became those delicious loaves of fresh bread. She always prepared the dough in the evening, then let it rise overnight, ready to be put in the oven in the morning.

Ma was a wonderful cook and such a caring person. I have vivid memories of every school day when my brothers and I would come home from school - she always had a treat waiting for us.

It could be floating island pudding, bread pudding, rice pudding, or chocolate pudding. To this day, that taste of those "treats" still remain within my taste buds. It seemed she was always baking us kids some goodies, big sugar cookies or those yummy molasses cookies. To think she did this all on a wood-burning cookstove - it's almost unbelievable.

I think that 75% of our suppers were fried potatoes and scrambled eggs. During the summer months, it was sliced tomatoes, green onions, and radishes. In the spring of the year, Ma always had one of us go out and pick dandelions. These dandelion greens which were so tender in the spring - she would prepare them with vinegar and bacon grease.

Ma also had this specialty that I really liked. She would drop bread dough in real hot grease. I believe she called it fried bread. She also made noodles. I used to love watching her make them. She would make a dough out of eggs and flour. With a rolling pin, she would stretch and roll it out on a white cloth. Then she would cut it into strips. I always knew when we were going to have company, because that's when she mixed up a huge bowl of jello.

In later years, I always wished that I could have done more for my mother. She was so kind and loveable, always doing something for her family.

I remember the day Ma passed away. All of the family was gathered around her hospital bed at old St. Joseph's Hospital, with the exception of Dewy. She was 69 years old when she died. I know she went straight to heaven. We all cried, and I remember Father Francis offering prayers and consoling words.

GRANDPA SIEVERT STACKING HAY

GRANDMA SIEVERT FEEDING HER GEESE AND CHICKENS

As I and my brothers grew up, we were all taught how to plow the ground and get it ready for planting. We were also taught how to cultivate the corn to rid it from weeds, plus helping with the haying, threshing, and filling the silo.

I really loved threshing time. That was the time when groups of neighbors got together, each one helping one another harvest their grain crops.

There were ten farmers that formed the "threshing ring" that Pa belonged to. They owned a threshing machine, and a steam engine to run that machine. When the crops were ripe, the grain was cut and bundled by a binder, pulled by four horses. The bundles were then put in "shocks" and left to dry out in the field. On threshing day, the men of the threshing ring would gather at the farm with their hayracks and horses. The steam engine and thresher were set up, and the bundles of grain would be brought in from the fields.

Pitchforks were used to pitch the bundles of grain into the mouth of the threshing machine. The grain flowed out into wagons, and the chaff and straw was blowing out and became a huge straw pile at the other end.

What I loved best about threshing time was the tasty, never-to-be-forgotten meal that was made for these hungry farmers. Ma would have Aunt Clara and Aunt Rose and Grandma come over and help her. A big roast was baked, pounds of potatoes were mashed, carrots and peas were cooked, onions were sliced, along with red-ripe tomatoes.

Wash basins and pails of water were assembled on benches beneath a tree for the farmers

to clean up before eating. No wash rags are seen, as all the men use their hands to clean up the dirt and sweat from their faces.

After the main course had been eaten, Ma and the aunts brought out pans and pans of apple pies. I used to be amazed at how much these men could eat. After they were all done, we kids could then sit down and eat all the goodies. I'll never forget those meals - they were the best I've ever eaten.

Pa had a herd of cows. He sold the milk from these cows to a dairy. This was his source of income.

As each of the boys became of age, we all joined in the milking of the cows. This was done twice a day - once in the morning and once at night. We had a small stool that we sat on near the back legs and close to the cow's "bag". We milked by hand, which I somehow enjoyed. My brothers and I would sing songs as we milked the cows. It was a happy time.

We always had three or four cats running around the farm. They took care of the mice, which are common wherever there is grain. As we milked the cows, the cats would sit down near us, waiting for the treat that was sure to come. We would squirt milk into their ever-anxious mouths.

We had a big pasture where the cows grazed. We had to go out into this pasture to bring the cows into the barn to be milked. In the fall and spring of the year, with the abundance of rain at that time, there were always mushrooms growing just waiting to be picked. We would take a milk

pail with us when we went after the cows. We would pick those "pink-bottom" mushrooms and bring them to Ma to fry up while we milked the cows - what a delicacy. I can almost taste them yet.

THE RUETTIGER FARM
AS I REMEMBERED IT

THE HOUSE
WINDMILL - PUMP HOUSE AND MILK HOUSE
CORN CRIB
COW TANK
THE BIG DAIRY BARN - SILO
HORSE BARN

THE WINTERS

Winter always seemed so severe when I was young and growing up. Here are some of the incidents I recall.

I often think now, how did we ever stay warm in the winter when we went to bed. Our bedrooms were upstairs in our big house. There was no heat in the bedrooms. We went to bed in our long-johns and covered up with a feather tick. This was a covering that enclosed goose-down feathers. I recall many times, when the temperature was real low, Ma would heat up the "flat-irons". She would then wrap pieces of cloth around them, and we would place them at our feet to keep warm until we fell asleep.

Also, I remember, when the temperature was below zero, we used to go into the barn and warm our cold hands by putting them under that fleshy part of the cow's body that overlaps their milk bags. It was always so nice and warm under there, and one's hands just seemed to fit.

I remember our water pump freezing in the pump house. We had no running water on the farm back in those days. Our drinking water was drawn and pumped from the pump in the pump house. This pump would often freeze up when it was real cold. We had to heat water in a tea kettle on the cook-stove, then take this hot water and pour it down the pump until the valve and leather gasket thawed free. One then had to "prime" the pump and get the water flowing again.

Our drinking water was in a pail which set on a table near the kitchen door. A metal dipper hung on the pail of water. Everyone would put this dipper into this pail of water, fill it with water, and quench our thirsts. There was only

one dipper, and we all drank from the same dipper and the same pail of water.

We had a series of pipes that ran from the pump house for about two hundred yards down to a huge wooden tank in the cowyard. From out of this tank, our herd of cows satisfied their thirst

Oftentimes in the winter, these pipes would freeze up. What a back-breaking job that always was, to get them thawed out. They would have to be uncoupled, and then a kerosene-saturated rag was ignited. This rag was wrapped around a stick and, after it was lit, it was placed beneath the frozen pipe until the ice broke loose in the pipe. We'd hold the pipe on one end, and long cylinders of ice would come out the other end. Then, after each section of pipe was completely free of ice, we would re-couple the pipes back together again.

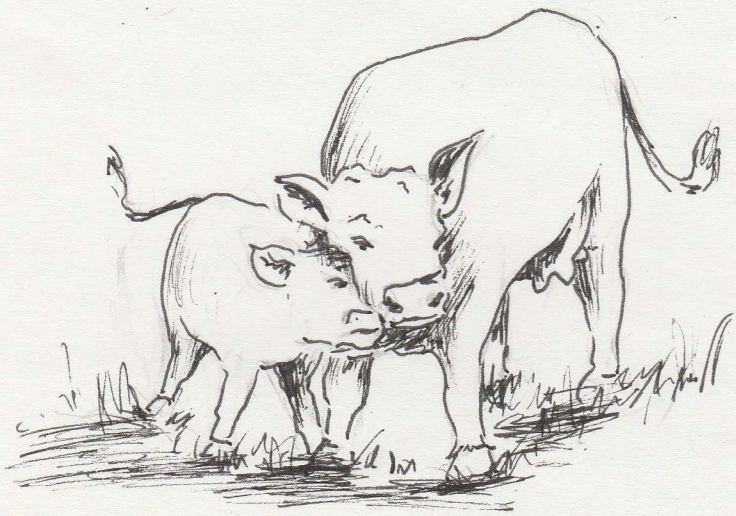
THAWING OUT THE WATER PUMP IN THE WINTER

LESSONS WE LEARNED

Being brought up on the farm, though it was hard work, it certainly had its rewards. We learned early in life the procreation of the animals. It didn't come to us from the streets, but we learned it first-hand through God's animals.

We viewed both life and death. We saw the birth of the animals - also their death. It was a good lesson to learn it through the animals.

We saw the beauty of spring when everything sprouted and everything was green. Also, the fall of the year when the trees lost their leaves, and then the winter snows covered them up. It was a good, clean, wholesome life, and I loved it all.



Ill never forget Hazel. Hazel was our pony. Pa bought her from a Mr. Werner, who lived about five farms east of us. She was about 3½ or 4 feet high, a kind and loveable animal.

Pa bought her so we would have transportation to st. Bernard's School. The school was about four miles from the farm. I believe that everyone who got to know Hazel (and there were many) loved her as much as we did. She was so tame that we could crawl under her stomach without any fear that she would move or step on us. We all rode her. All rode her bareback without a saddle, the brothers and sisters, plus so many city kids who would flock to our farm.

We would hitch Hazel to a two-wheeled cart and off we'd go to school. Pa had rented a stall in Mr. Peterson's barn, which was near St. Bernard's School. When we got to Mr. Peterson's barn, we would unhitch Hazel from the cart, remove her harness, then let her rest all day in her barn stall. We would feed her, then walk over to school.

The kids at school called Mr. Peterson's barn the "pony barn", as two other farm boys kept their ponies there also. Whenever two kids at school got into an argument, the fight was always settled after school in the back of the pony barn.

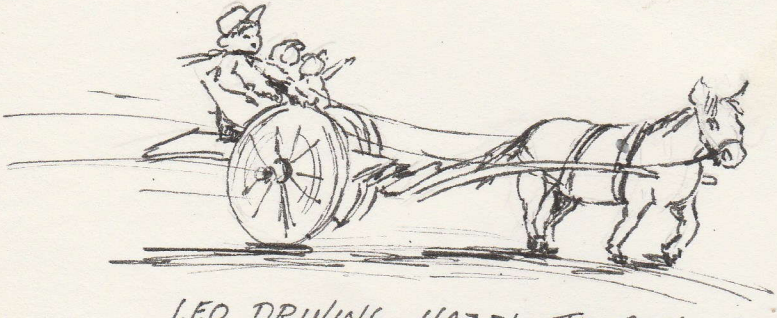
Going to school in the cart with Hazel wasn't my happiest times. One was so cold when they arrived at school. I remember Ma heating bricks, and Pa wrapping them in gunny sacks and placing them beside our feet to help keep them warm until we got to school. He would wrap blankets all around us, tucking them in at the

sides, so no wind or air could get to us. We wore stocking caps on our heads, and Pa would wrap scarves around our mouths. Only our eyes were left to face the cold.

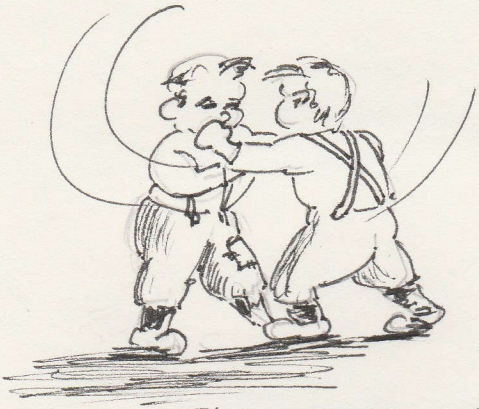
I remember a beautiful elderly man that always waved to us as we passed by his house on our way to school. His name was Dean Jackson. If only he knew what an impression he made on me. I often thought just how wonderful this old world would be if more people were like him. He was so kind and friendly. Later on in life, his daughter worked with me in the Art Department at the P. F. Volland Co. - Dee Jackson Witten.

Having Hazel on the farm brought many kids to visit us. Kids would ride out from town on their bikes to get a chance to ride Hazel. They would trade us bike rides, letting us ride their bikes if we would let them ride Hazel. They would bring their lunches along, and they would trade their store-bought cookies for Ma's home-made ones. The Hastert brothers were two who always came out - Jack and Bob. Bob owns the White Fence Farm, and Jack runs the Clock Tower Restaurant in Plainfield.

We used to have to curry and brush Hazel after she was rode a lot. She used to like that. She would stand so firm and straight, and never move a muscle until we were finished.



LEO DRIVING HAZEL TO SCHOOL



THOSE FIGHTS OVER AT THE PONY BARN

GAMES WE PLAYED

We played a lot of games when we were growing up. My favorite was hide-and-seek. There were so many places to hide. Run-sheep-run was another. The kids would all line up, and the one who was "it" would count to ten and then holler run-sheep-run. The person who was "it" would then try to catch someone. We would then repeat the game. Then, there was "Andy-I-over". You would throw a ball over a building, and someone on the other side would try to catch it. Each side had a team. If they caught the ball, they would yell "Here comes someone over", and the person who caught the ball would run around to the other side and become part of that team. Of course, everyone played marbles and "kick-the-can", plus baseball. The girls played "jacks" and "jump-the-rope" and "hopscotch".

I don't know how many balls of tape we used, trying to tape up the only ball we had when we played baseball.

FOOD FOR OUR TABLE

Ma always had a flock of chickens. These kept Ma supplied with fresh eggs for eating and baking. Saturday night I recall Pa catching a rooster and twisting its neck off, so we could have fried chicken for Sunday dinner, which was always a treat.

Ma always raised "peeps" as she called them. The baby chicks were always born in the spring of the year. Nature is so wonderful. Come spring and the hens would hatch - quit laying eggs and just sit on the eggs in the nest. When this would happen, Ma would take a dozen eggs and place them beneath the hen. The hen would keep these eggs warm, and in 21 days cracks would appear in the eggs, and soon thereafter little chicks would appear from out of the shells. This was such a beautiful experience to have seen.

Pa always raised a lot of pigs or "hawgs" as I called them. He would butcher three or four of these in the late fall of the year. From these butchered pigs, we got meat for the winter - hams, bacon, ribs, sausage, and, of course, head cheese.

I used to help Pa with this butchering. Pa had a tri-pod made out of pipes. He would put the tri-pod up in the air, and from its center he would attach a chain. On this chain was then hung a big black iron kettle. We would build a fire beneath this kettle after we filled it with water. The fire got this water very hot; sometimes it would boil.

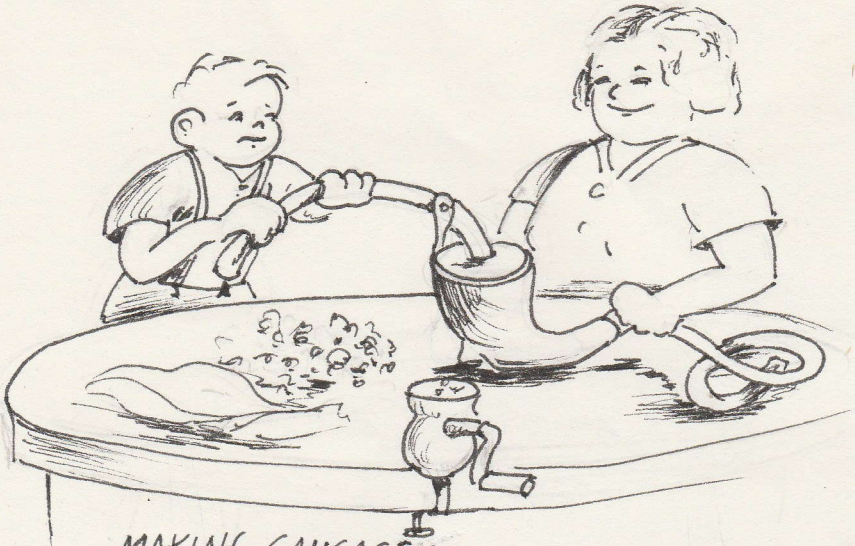
After catching the pig, he would attach a rope to the pig's leg and lead him to the corn crib where he slaughtered him. This was done by putting the pig on his back and sticking a knife into his neck, which went into the pig's

heart. Within a matter of minutes, the pig bled to death.

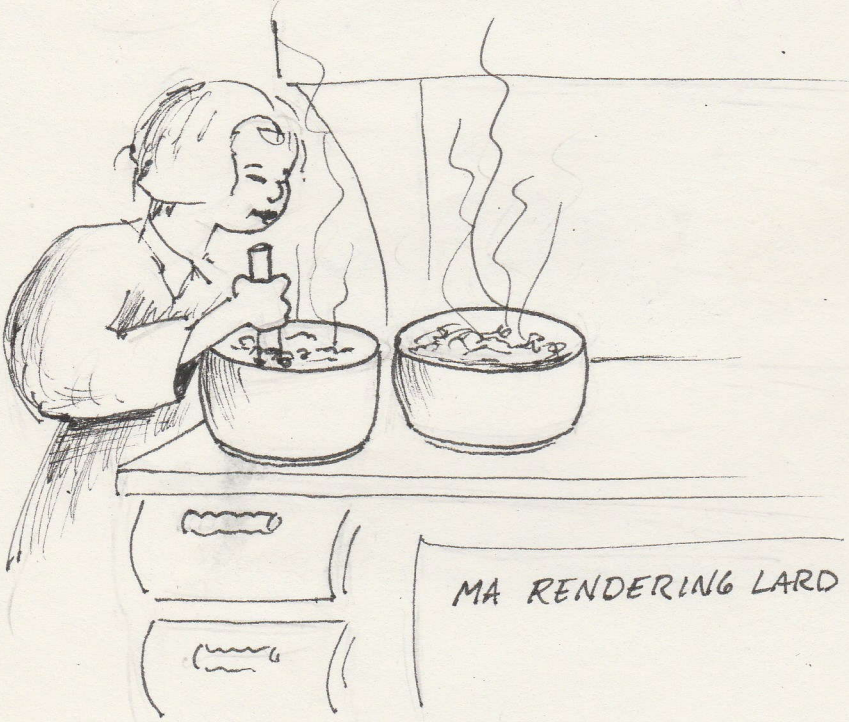
Pa would then put the boiling water into a wooden barrel. He then made incisions in the pig's feet close to its hoofs. He inserted a wooden gambel through these cuts in the pig's feet. He would then attach a block and tackle to the gambel, and with the block and tackle attached to a ceiling joist he would hoist the pig up over the barrel of water. By doing this, it would soften the hairs on the pig's carcass. The pig was then raised from the barrel and put on a bench. My job was then to help scrape the hair from the carcass. When the hair was all removed, the carcass was so clean and nice-looking.

Pa would then remove the insides and start trimming all the fat from the carcass. In the house, Ma was ready to help with the next step, which was to make lard for the cooking and frying. Pa would bring all those fatty parts that he trimmed from the meat. All the kids who were old enough would then cut this fat into little pieces. Ma would put these pieces into iron kettles that she had on the stove. This fat was then fried down until it became liquid grease. The grease was then poured into glazed crocks. This grease was used not only for cooking but for preserving meat for the winter. I remember Ma taking the pork chops and spare ribs, putting them in layers, and pouring grease over each layer. This would then harden over the meat and preserve it. These crocks of meat would then be put in the cellar, which was always so cool.

From the pig's head, Ma would make head



MAKING SAUSAGE



MA RENDERING LARD

cheese, which was always so tasty. She also made liver and pork sausage. This was done by grinding up the meat with a hand grinder, then putting this ground meat in a sausage maker. We would attach a sausage casing on the one end and, by pulling on the sausage maker's handle, it would force the meat into the casing.

Later, this sausage, along with the hams and bacon, would be taken to a smoke house where this meat was smoked. Pa would build a smoking fire in this smoke house, and the smoke would completely cover the whole inside of the building. Pa had all the meat hanging from pipes that ran across the building.

I remember he would take the hams and bacon and saturate them with salt. This salt helped preserve the meat. This meat was then hung upstairs in one of the cool rooms.

In the basement, Pa also had an area where he stored the home-grown potatoes. Also in the basement were stored the crocks of meat and homemade sauerkraut. The sauerkraut was made from our home grown cabbage.

I remember, too, that Pa made his own wine. He had barrels of it down in the basement. He made this from various sources, like dandelion flowers, elderberry blossoms, choke berry fruit, and, of course, from grapes. The kids all had to help pick these flowers and berries for Pa's wine. The choke cherry was the hardest to pick as they were so tiny, and one had to crawl up into the tree to gather these little berries. They were about half the size of a pea, and it seemed it took forever to even cover the bottom of the bucket we were using, let alone fill the

bucket. All of these fruits and blossoms came from the wild. I mean, they grew wild in the woods.

When Pa made this wine, he always put a "mother" into the mash. I guess this mother was some type of yeast that made the mash ferment. I guess it worked because, whenever we had company, Pa always served a glass of wine.

We had a big orchard with lots of apple trees, a couple pear and crabapple trees, plus a grape arbor with lots of grapevines.

Ma would make jelly and jam from the crabapples and grapes. The apples were so tasty when they first ripened. There was one tree we called the "early apple tree". The first apples ripened on this tree. They were the tastiest and best apples in our orchard. I recall many times climbing that special tree and just sitting in a crotch between two limbs, eating apples to my heart's content.

In the fall of the year, Pa would take a wagon box full of apples, worms and all, to a cider mill. The apples were crushed, and the juice put in barrels. This juice became our apple cider. Then later on, it became our vinegar. Pa must have put a "mother" into the juice to make it ferment and turn into vinegar.

I often think back now and marvel at how self-sufficient my mother and father were. The good earth and hard work supplied all their needs. I never, ever remember being hungry. Ma made her own soap, and Pa always had a garden. In it, he grew onions, radishes, peas, beans. He had cabbage and tomato plants. He had acres of

else.

One year we had an abundance of corn, and Pa told us kids that if we wanted to we could go out and sell it and keep the money we got. I remember selling it for fifteen cents a dozen or two dozens for a quarter. We would hitch Hazel up to her cart and fill the cart with ears of corn. We would then drive down to what we called the "subdivision". This was where there were a lot of houses. We would knock on the doors, and almost everyone would buy one or two dozen ears. I remember our biggest thrill was when Silver Cross Hospital took nine dozen ears. When we drove home after our sales, we all divided up the money, and every one of us felt like millionaires.

PA TAKING APPLES TO THE CIDER MILL

PA'S BUSINESSES

Pa seemed to have a business instinct. One day I just suppose he decided to start a milk route. He contacted people in the "subdivision" and got about a dozen customers. He charged 10¢ for a quart of milk delivered to their door. He put this milk in mason jars. Word got around, and he got more customers. Soon he had a nice little milk route. He bought milk bottles, just plain bottles, but as his business grew, he had his name put on the bottles. It said - Pure Milk bottled by E. A. Ruettiger. He concocted a unique way of filling these bottles. I suppose it was his answer to automation. He took an eight-gallon milk can and, at its bottom, had a brass faucet installed. Now, all one had to do was fill the milk can with milk, put a bottle under the faucet, open the faucet up, fill the bottle, and shut off the faucet. What do you think of Pa's automation?

This dairy business was really nice. I used to go with Pa and help with the home delivering of the bottled milk. His route kept growing. One had to get up real early in the morning. We had an old Model "T" truck that we hauled the cases of milk in. It was fun running from door to door and placing a bottle of milk on the steps or porch. I remember many times being chased by dogs, but I was never actually bitten. But lots of times, I was really scared.

Along the route was a tavern, where Pa would stop the Model "T". He would go into the tavern and get a shot or two of whiskey. After he had his shots, he always came out with a bar of candy for me. It was a Tango Hershey bar. I'll never forget Pa's treats. Those Tango bars were the best-tasting food that any kid ever had.

Once a month, Pa would go collecting. His customers always paid once a month. Pa had a long milk pad where everyday he marked what each customer received. We would place their bill beneath the bottle at the end of the month.

It took Pa all day to do his collecting. A lot of the customers would give Pa a glass of wine, so when Pa came home he was always a little tipsy.

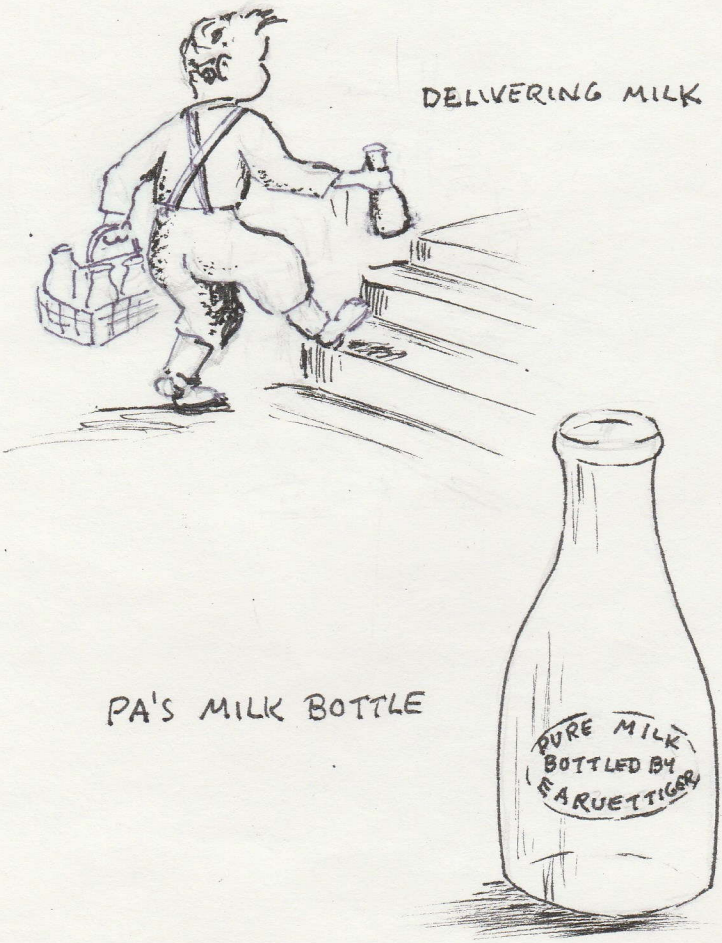
As the milk business grew, Pa hired a "hired man". He stayed with us in a bedroom upstairs. His name was "Doc". It wasn't long after Pa hired Doc that Doc and I were delivering the milk. I still remember one morning, after all the milk was delivered and we were heading for home, Doc said to me, "Shiner, how would you like to drive the Model "T" home?" You can imagine my surprise and exhuberance. I was really excited as I got behind the wheel. I had watched Doc many times how he used to drive, so as he explained it all again to me, I thought to myself - this will be a breeze.

After many jerks, stops, and starts, I finally got the Model "T" going. I guess I was fourteen years old at the time I became a driver, which was really a very young age. Of course, we never told Pa - it was Doc's and my little secret.

Back in those days, the Health Department would make you display a quarantine sign on your front door if you had measles, whooping cough, or scarlet fever. You were not allowed to deliver milk to those quarantined houses.

Also, back then, there were no funeral homes.

death. The wake was held in the home, and the body was laid out in the home. If the death was that of a husband, the widow always wore black for a certain number of days.



One of his favorite sayings when he wanted to bet was "I'll bet you, money, chalk, or marbles."

He used to tell me this many, many times - if you are building something, and you have a board that needs to be sawed, measure it once, then again, before you cut it. This "little axiom" has been proven so true to me over the years when I would be building something.

Another saying of his I remember came after Spring Creek overflowed its banks and a lot of the homes were flooded. Pa said to me, "Lambert, if you ever build a house of your own, always build it on high ground." I never forgot that.

My favorite saying of his, which I have repeated oh-so-many-times to others, happened when we had been "making hay", which we did every summer. After many long hours of hauling the hay in from the field, Pa and I would be sitting up front on the hay rack. One of us would be driving the team of horses. Usually this would happen at the end of the day, and it would be our last load. Invariably, one or the other horse would start farting. Pa would look at me and smilingly exclaim, "Ahhh, Lamberrrt - any old horse can fart early in the morning, but it takes a good one to be able to fart at the end of the day."

THE CRASH OF '29

I remember it well. I remember reading that some of the people who lost a lot of money committed suicide. Many people jumped out of buildings, killing themselves, in the big cities.

Everyone seemed to be out of work and couldn't pay their bills. I remember that Pa still delivered their milk until they told him to stop. Many never were able to pay their milk bill. Pa would let those who wanted to, come out to the farm where Ma would feed them and they would work off their bill. I remember one customer who was a barber. He offered to cut Pa's and all the boys' hair to pay his bill. He charged 25¢ a haircut. Eventually, his bill was paid. We never went hungry, as the farm supplied our food.

The Great Depression followed the stock market crash. I remember listening to F.D.R. Fireside Chats on radio. I remember all the programs he had to bring the country out of the depression, the W.P.A., the N.R.A., and all those other initialed projects.

PA LOSES HIS HERD OF COWS AND FARM

It was shortly after this time that the Health Department enacted some of the stringest health laws. These laws were enacted to try and wipe out tuberculosis. Anyone who produce milk had to have their herd tested to see if they had T.B.

I remember the vet going to each farm and performing this test. He would have a needle syringe from which he inserted a fluid into the fleshy part behind the cow's tail. After three days, he would read the reaction to this fluid. If the cow had T.B., the flesh would swell up. Pa and many other farmers lost nearly their whole herds of cows because they had T.B.

Out of 35 head of cows, Pa only had four cows left. The infected cows had to be sold to the stockyards where they were slaughtered for their meat. I think the price he received for them was 25 to 35 dollars.

He had to replace the herd, and paid $200 for each cow. It was a rough time for Pa, and in time he could not make it. He had to borrow money to replace the herd, and with the debt he still owed on the property - he just gave up.

When Pa's father passed away, it was Pa's decision to take over the farm, stay farming, and pay off his brothers and sister. He just couldn't do it any longer. So he told them that he would turn the farm back to them. All he wanted for his share was five acres of land. What a sad price for him to have to pay. How cruel it was for Pa and Ma to have to give up what they had tried so hard and worked so hard to keep. I suppose that this is just another part of life. The saddest part of it was that his sister, Aunt Louise, did not need the money. She and Uncle

Pete were well off. I guess, though, whenever there is money involved, love sometimes disappears.

'PA LOSES THE FARM'
IT MUST OF BEEN A VERY TOUGH DECISION TO MAKE AFTER A LIFE TIME OF LIVING ON THE LAND.

PA BUILDS A NEW HOME

The little town of Homer, Illinois, had a town hall that they had planned on tearing down and replacing it with a new town hall. Pa heard about the town's intentions and offered to buy the building. His offer was accepted.

He had a mover bring it to the five acres. A basement was dug, and the building was moved onto the basement, then literally torn apart. Pa hired a carpenter and, with many long hours of hammering and nailing, they remodeled the old Homer Town Hall, and it became our home when we moved from the farm.

Pa had a sale, and sold just about everything he had accumulated over his many years of farming. All the horses, cows, and the machinery, and many years of memories. I remember how sad both Pa and Ma were as they saw their life-long things being taken away. We then moved to the other side of Pilcher Park and into our new home.

I remember Pa getting a job down at the ammunition plant when World War II broke out.

50 years ago, 1938

■ Historic Frankfort Village Hall, meeting place for the town fathers for more than half a century, was sold at public auction for $158. The purchaser, Eugene Reuttiger, Maple Road gasoline service station proprietor, will move the building to his gas station but doesn't know what he will do with it.

PA BUILDS A GAS STATION AND TAVERN

On the northwest corner of the five acres, Pa put up a gas station. It was a small building, and he signed up with Standard Oil Co. to sell their gas, olean, and their products. It helped Pa make a few dollars and put food on our table. I worked there, as did all of the brothers.

When you hear the expression "pumping gas", that was just what we actually did back in those days. The gas pumps literally had to have the gas hand-pumped into the top of the pump, which had a glass container. When someone ordered four gallons of gas, you pumped four gallons into that container, and from a hose put it into the car's gas tank.

I enjoyed working at the gas station. It was there that I played a lot of checkers with my friend Eric Keith. We also used to play "catch", tossing a baseball back and forth. I loved waiting on people, talking to them, and selling them gas and oil. It was an enjoyable job.

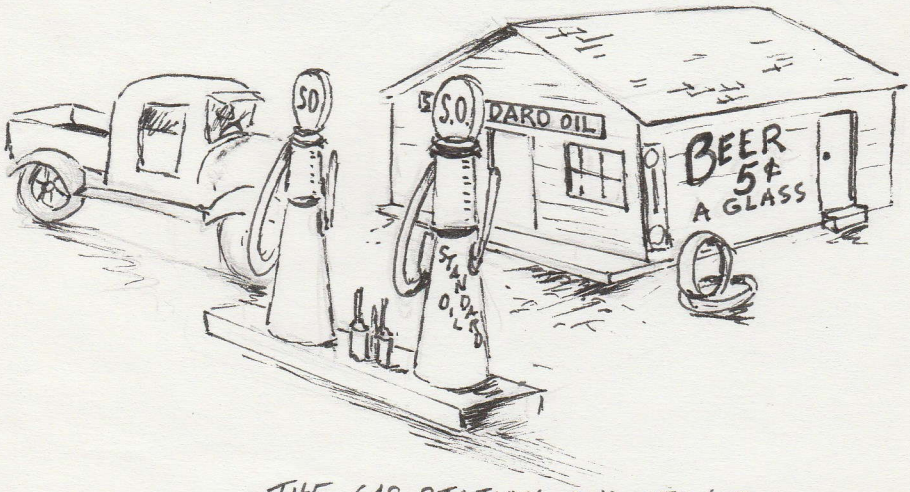
Pa also built a tavern in back of the gas station after a few years. I remember painting a sign on the side of the building. I made a big beer mug and lettering that read: Beer - five cents a glass.

We even sold sandwiches on Saturday nights. Ma would make beef and ham sandwiches, and we set up tables for the people to seat themselves.

One night, another lad and I did some entertaining. I had taken some steel guitar lessons, and I could play some songs by numbers. He could sing and play melody, so we used to get together and just have fun. I would play bass, plunking out just the chords, and he would sing. We sometimes heard some hand-clapping which made us feel good.

I remember that gas was stolen at night from the gas station. Also, my brother Dewy was robbed one afternoon.

I recall that Pa used to have a couple of us sleep at the gas station to watch for the robbers. He gave us a revolver to keep alongside of us. As I think back now, I thank the good Lord, that no one came to rob us. We were so young and incapable of preventing a robbery.



THE GAS STATION AND TAVERN
ON MAPLE ROAD

BROTHER LEO HAS A BASEBALL TEAM

My brother Leo was a wonderful organizer, and he loved the game of baseball. He got a group of kids together and formed a team. We would play on Sunday afternoons. I played on Leo's team. Some of the players I remember were "Whitey" White, Steve Petro, Harvey Struder, Eric Keith, Don Miller - and a lot of names I forgot. We won our share of games and lost our share, too. The names of our teams through the years were Maple Street Muckers, The Marley Beavers, Standard Oil, and New Lenox A.C. I really enjoyed those baseball playing years.

MY SCHOOL DAYS AT ST. BERNARD'S

My school days at St. Bernard's were mostly enjoyable. I recall my first day at school. At recess I remember having to go "potty". On the farm, one went wherever it was convenient - back of the barn, behind a tree, off in a corner, almost anywhere. So I proceeded to unbutton my pants in the front and started to relieve myself in a corner of the schoolyard. My brother Leo spotted me, ran up to me and told me to stop. Then he told me just where I was supposed to go. Boy, did I ever get a talking-to when I got home.

At St. Bernard's there were only two rooms upstairs over the church. Grades one to four were taught in one room, and grades five to eight were taught in the other room. Franciscan nuns taught at the school. Some of the nuns were so kind, and others, at the time, seemed downright mean. I remember that Sisters Jolenta and Alfrido were the ones who seemed mean. Sister Charles Marie sticks in my mind as a kind and loving nun.

Once, while up at the blackboard, about a half dozen of us were supposed to work out a problem on the blackboard. I whispered to the boy who was standing next to me. Sister Alfrido saw me whisper. She came up behind me and whacked me a "good one" across my legs with her pointer stick. Boy, I never talked or whispered again when she was around.

From time to time a fight would start at school. These fights were always finished after school over at the pony barn. It was far enough away from the school, so that the nuns weren't aware of what went on over there.

I remember that there were a few fights

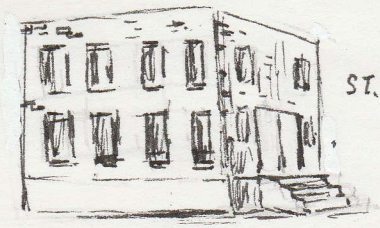
between the A. O. Marshall Public School kids and the St. Bernard's kids. A. O. Marshall school was about four or five blocks away from St. Bernard's. Many of the fights were caused by the A. O. Marshall kids walking by our schoolyard and calling us "cat lickers" (Catholics).

On St. Patrick's Day, St. Bernard's always celebrated that day. They always had an Irish program with songs and dancers. I loved to watch the dancers dance the Irish jig. It amazed me how fast they could dance and put their legs and feet in those positions. I remember two of the young gals who used to perform - Wilma Muenzing and Mary Agnes Wheeler. Those two could really do the Irish jig. The Irish ballads that the Sheridan brothers, Ray and Bill, used to sing were all so beautiful and touching.

Ma and Pa had to pay tuition for us kids to attend school. Many times we paid this tuition by bringing a couple dozen eggs to the nuns. I believe the tuition was 50¢ a month per student.

I remember those who were in my class when we graduated. Ray Kinney, Chuck Wheeler, Kenneth Barnes, Arnold Winke, Willa Schaill, Eleanor McLaughlin, and Rita Wilson.

I graduated in 1928. That was the year my brother Leo graduated from Joliet Township High School.



SOME GRADE SCHOOL MEMORIES

I remember the game of mibs that was played during recess and noon hour. There were two different games that could be played. For one, a small ring or circle was drawn on the ground. Mibs (which were made from clay baked and hardened) were then put into this ring by those who were to play. The amount of mibs to be put in was determined before the game began. We would then stand about five paces back from the ring and "lag" our shooter to see whose "lag" was the closest. This person would then be the first person to shoot at the marbles in the ring. Any marbles that he would shoot out of the ring were his to keep. If he missed shooting out a marble, the next shooter was the next closest, and so on.

The other game that was played with marbles was - a huge ring was drawn in the dirt, and all the players would put the marbles in the center of the ring. The shooter (which was also determined by lagging) would shoot from the big ring line.

I never was too good at playing marbles, but brother Dewy was real good.

Must tell you about how gullible that Dewy and I were during the marble season.

A lot of the shooters were made out of glass and were very easy to become nicked. One of the kids told Dewy and I that if we put these nicked shooters in a big can and covered them over with lard, in three days the nicks would disappear from the shooters. Well, Dewy and I did everything that this kid told us. We waited three days and nothing happened. We waited four, then five, then a week, and still the shooters had their nicks. We went to this kid and asked him "Just what were we doing wrong?" The kid busted

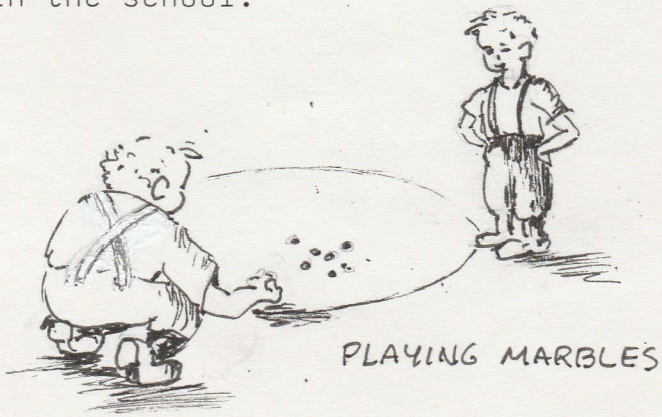
out laughing. It was then that we realized that we had been "taken". Another lesson in life had been learned - don't trust everyone.

There was always a game of "ball" during the noon hour if someone brought a ball and bat to school, which wasn't too often until Father Murphy became our pastor at St. Bernard's.

He was a fat, jolly priest whom everyone loved, especially us kids. I remember the first week he was there. He had gone to town, and when he returned, he came to the schoolyard with bats and balls for both the girls and the boys to play with. I remember how happy everyone was. I'll sure never forget Father Murphy.

I remember, too, when he passed away. He was the pastor for only three or four years when this happened. They had his body lie in state in the church. I recall how sad all the parishioners were, and everyone going to view the body and going to the funeral.

We played a lot of soccer in the fall of the year. We would choose up sides, and one team would play the other. Ray Kinney was the best player in the school.



PLAYING MARBLES

MY HIGH SCHOOL DAYS

I started to Joliet Township High School in 1928. Brother Dewy was a junior that year.

I vividly recall my first day at high school. It seemed so huge in comparison to St. Bernard's - so many rooms and so many students.

The first place we freshmen had to go was to the auditorium. I remember looking at those printed words above the stage - "The foundation of every state is in the education of its youth." What beautiful words. They are still indented in my mind.

I took an industrial art course and chose electric shop as my major course. I enjoyed all my courses and was very much intrigued with what I learned about electricity.

I remember our first project. The teacher told the students to wire up a door bell. Most of the students had no trouble at all wiring up the bell, while I, being from the farm, which at that time had no electricity, knew absolutely nothing about what electricity was or could do - boy, did I have a problem. I remember the instructor, a Mr. Thenses, saying "Don't worry. You'll learn all about electricity soon enough." He was right. The ones who didn't know soon learned all the basic principles and were able to keep up with the rest of the class.

One of my biggest rewards in having learned about electricity was when Pa asked me if I could wire up the cow barn. About six months prreviously, we had gotten electricity brought into the house.

Previous to that, we used kerosene lamps for

all our lighting needs. To grow up in the dimness of kerosene lamps, an electric light was like the brightness of the sun to us.

In the barn at night when we milked the cows, we had kerosene lanterns. I remember we always had one hanging by the milk can so we knew where to pour the milk. Then one half-way down between all the cows.

One, every evening, had to put kerosene in these lamps and lanterns, plus cleaning the globes and trimming the wicks.

Now, that would be over after I got the barn wired. It was a challenge. But I was up for it and got it done. Pa was real proud of me, which meant so much to me as Pa, not too often, offered any credit. Now, with just a flip of the switch, the whole barn was aglow in electric light.

I always had a great desire inside me to draw and sketch. I was always drawing something in my spare time. Where I got that desire, I don't know, but it was something that God gave me.

I remember, when I was about 12 years old, I heard on the radio (Station WLS) that they were having a drawing contest for my age bracket. They asked for a drawing that would depict where a country-western singer got the songs that they sung. I entered that contest. I remember making a pencil sketch of a little log cabin up in the hills and this singer walking up this winding road to get the words for his song. I received a nice letter from WLS congratulating me on winning third place. They said it was no small honor as they had at least 5000 entries. I

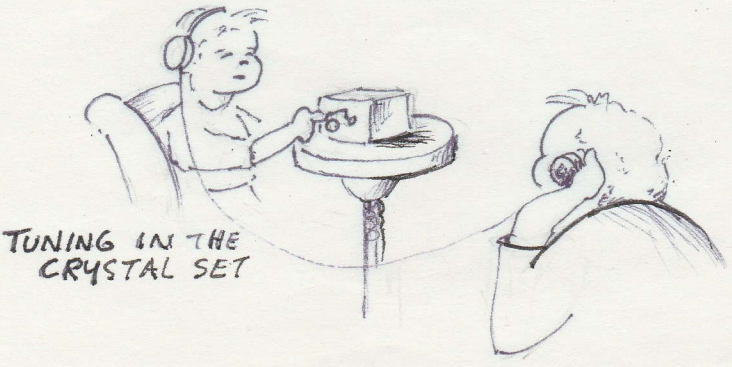
received three Bradley Kincaid song books. This singer was very popular back in 1925.

While in high school when a junior, I requested an art class. It was granted. Some of my happiest times in high school were in that class.

I remember that wonderful art teacher, Ester Ruble Richardson. I learned so much from her. Her inspiration meant so much to me, which later on in life made me choose an art career.

High school was a lot of fun. I attended many of the sport games - football, basketball, and track. Though I never participated in any of them, I sure enjoyed watching them. Brother Dewy was in track, running the mile. When Bernie and Danny attended Catholic High, they both excelled in football.

I remember during the basketball season, brother Leo had a crystal radio set. You listened to it by putting a set of headphones over your ears. He and I used to enjoy listening to the games. He would take the headset apart, and we would listen with one headphone over one ear.



I GO OUT WEST

When I was about 16, I experienced something I'll never forget. I went out West. Mr. and Mrs. Burt Purdy lived about three miles from us. My Dad bought milk from them when his cows were not providing enough milk for his customers. I got to know them quite well. They had two sons, Joyce and Walt, and two daughters Phyllis and Eleanor. Joyce was my age.

Mr. Purdy had sheep shipped to his farm in the fall from a rancher in Montana. He would fatten them up on his farm, then sell them in the spring.

Mr. Purdy decided to visit this rancher, along with Mrs. Purdy, Joyce, and the two girls. He asked me if I'd care to go along as company for Joyce.

Of course, I was thrilled, and asked Pa and Ma if I could go. They said how much was it going to cost. I said that Mr. Purdy said I could go for $15.00. I told Ma and Pa that I had saved the money from what Pa had given me when I helped him with the milk route. Both Pa and Ma said "Go. It will do you some good."

So we left for Montana. Mr. Purdy, whose name was Burt, had an old Nash car. He also had a two-wheeled trailer that he pulled behind the car. He loaded up this trailer with a 50-gallon barrel which was full of gas. He also had a big toolbox with just lots of tools in it. He also had a big tent and extra tires.

When we left Joliet, we looked like the "Grapes of Wrath". We headed west on old "66", the two-lane highway that stretched across the U.S. from east to west.

When we stopped in the evening, usually in a state park, we unloaded the trailer and pitched the tent. Mr. and Mrs. Purdy and the two girls slept in the tent. Joyce and I bedded down on blankets in the trailer. Mrs. Purdy usually made sandwiches during the noon hour and cooked a hot dinner on a portable gas burner.

Mrs. Purdy was a high-strung individual, while Burt was just the opposite. He had that "devil-may-care" attitude and nothing, absolutely nothing, seemed to bother him.

I remember stopping at the Onyx Cave - I believe it was in Missouri. Mrs. Purdy got so scared going down inside the cave, but Burt and us kids thoroughly enjoyed it.

I'll never forget seeing the Black Hills. They are in South Dakota. Everything was so flat, and there in the distance were these hills. They seemed so unreal, all black and so far off.

When we arrived in Rapid City, South Dakota, we had our first bad luck. The car started to knock, which is a major problem meaning a bearing is gone in the motor. I'll never forget how Burt got out his tools, crawled beneath the car, and, it seemed to me, took just all apart. He crawled from beneath the car with a piston in his hand. He told Joyce and me that he found the problem. The bearing was gone on the connecting rod of #3 piston. He said to us, "You two go down to this junkyard, which was about three miles away, and see if you can get a used one."

Imagine letting two 16 year old kids take that responsibility? But we did and came back with a used piston and connecting rod. Burt put

the car all back together, and it ran perfect.

We stopped off and visited Mt. Rushmore. At that time, there were only three faces carved on the mountain - Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson. Later on, they added Teddy Roosevelt. We also went down into the Homestake Gold Mine and visited Boot Hill Cemetery.

We then headed for Montana. Of course, we had to cross the mountains, and I can still hear Mrs. Purdy screaming as we went around the mountains. At that time, there were no guard rails, and as she looked out her window and saw nothing but a straight-down drop, she would scream, "Burt, we're going to go over the side. Please, please be careful." Of course, Burt just smiled and continued on driving.

We visited Yellowstone Park and, as one drove through the park, those huge black bears would come up alongside the car. It was quite a thrilling experience. We saw Old Faithful and all the other sights there. I'll never forget Yellowstone.

We finally got to Montana and the sheep ranch. The rancher was so glad to see Mr. Purdy and the family. He was such a nice man. He took us out on the range to visit the sheep. It seemed we drove for miles in his truck. Finally he spotted the huge herd of sheep. It was attended by an old grizzly man who was the sheep herder. There was an old trailer close by where the herder ate his meals and slept at night. Periodically they would move the trailer, as the sheep would need new grazing land.

This was quite an experience for all of us to see

to see, including Mr. Purdy. I can remember, as we left the herd of sheep and drove back to the ranch, passing an old log cabin with cactus growing up on and over the roof of the cabin. I had a camera, and I can remember taking a picture of it.

We had been gone two weeks, and Burt thought we'd better start for home. I don't think I'll ever forget our problems as we headed for home. It was in Thermopolis, Wyoming, (I'll always remember that town)that Burt ran out of money. He just didn't have any more money - he was completely broke. Maybe you can now understand Burt's personality. He never told anyone that he was running out. Of course, Mrs. Purdy said, "Burt, what are we going to do?" Burt said, "Don't worry. I'll call up Walt (he was the boy who was at home) and have him go down and collect the rent from our renter and have him send us some money." (The Purdys owned a house in Lockport which they rented out.)

So Burt walked into town to the Western Union office and wired Walt for money. The next day Walt wired out $25.00.

From that day on, we lived on beans - morning, noon, and night. Mrs. Purdy made them every imaginable way. We had to stretch that $25.00, using it only for gas and oil.

I don't remember how many days it took us, but we finally reached the Mississippi River. Now we had to cross over the river and there was a toll at that time. When we got to the toll booth, Burt told us he didn't have any money for the toll. He said he'd have to talk to the toll keeper, which he did, and he waved us to go across. We asked him what he told the fellow, and he said

that he just had a run of hard luck, his tires blew out, and he had to use his money to buy some used tires, so he let him go across. Guess what? When we got to Rockford, Illinois, we ran out of gas. So Burt put in a collect call to Walt again, asking him to bring him some money. Well, some time later on in the day, Walt drove up riding his motorcycle and gave his Dad $10.00. Burt walked for gas, and we finally arrived back in Joliet.

If I live to be a hundred, I'll never forget my first trip out west. To say it was exciting, it was more than that. It was truly an education in so many, many things. I loved all its ups and downs, its good and its bad experiences, its trials and its errors. What more can I say - only this - I'd do it again.

HEADING WEST WITH THE PURDY'S IN 1930

AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL

I graduated from Joliet Central High School in 1932. I would have so much liked to have gone on to college or at least to an art school. It was the middle of the Depression, and Pa and Ma couldn't afford to further my education.

Jobs were practically non-existent at that time, so I stayed on the farm. I helped Pa plow, cultivate, and various other farm chores.

When I reached my 21st birthday, Pa surprised me by giving me a pig. As I think back now, it was a gift that Pa gave from his heart. That gift was something, and the only something that he could afford.

At the time, I didn't know just what I was going to do with it. One day I was talking to a farmer friend of mine. I told him about the pig Pa had given me, and he offered to buy it from me for $25.00. I sold it to him, and I felt like a millionaire.

It wasn't long after my dealings with this farmer that he asked me if I'd work for him. His name was Owen Storm. He said he'd pay me $18.00 a month plus room and board. I asked Pa and Ma what they thought of my leaving home and working for Mr. Storm. They said, if that was what I wanted, to go ahead. So I left Ma and Pa and took my first job.

Mr. Storm was just a few years older than I. His father had passed away, and he, his older sister, and Mrs. Storm were running their farm together. They milked a few cows, raised some pigs, and had a big flock of chickens.

They also had about 20 acres of land on

which they had planted tomatoes. These tomatoes they sold to the Campbell Soup Co. They took them into Chicago to their processing plant.

I helped with all the various jobs that are necessary on a farm, plus helping pick those tomatoes. That was a back-breaking job. You had to stoop over and remove the fruit from the vines and put them in a bushel basket, then carry the basket to the end of the row.

Mr. Storm, during the picking season, would hire about ten people to help pick. He paid them 25¢ a bushel. If one worked hard, he could pick about four bushels in a day.

I worked on this farm for about a year. It taught me that life, now that I was out of school, was very, very different. If one wanted to eat, he had to work for it.

As I mentioned, I worked for Mr. Storm less than a year, when I heard that up in Chicago, they were hiring people at the Lloyd A. Fry Roofing Mill. I applied and was hired. It paid 40¢ an hour. Brother Dewy was working there, along with four others from the area.

One of the fellows owned a car, and we all rode with him as a car pool. I remember paying $2.00 a week for the ride to Chicago. We used to joke a lot together as we rode back and forth.

This roofing mill made roofing material for Sears Roebuck. It was quite a different and new experience for me to now be working in a factory.

There was this huge machine that had fed into it huge rolls of paper. This paper was actually

made right there at the plant from old newspapers and rags. As the paper went into this machine, it was saturated with tar. Into this saturated tar paper was imbedded fine granules of pebbles which were dyed various colors. After going through this process of making the roofing material, the finished product finally came out the end of the machine. As it came out, a rolling roller rolled it up into rolls. These rolls were then cut off by the man at the end of the machine. This man would push this roll onto a conveyor. As the roll came down the conveyor, it was my job to insert into the one end of the roll, a bag of nails, a can of tar, plus a wire with an end lid. I also had to attach a sticker to the top of the roll. I did this continuously for eight hours with a potty break in the morning and afternoon, plus a lunch break.

I always thought that farming was a hard job, but when one works behind a machine, he is working constantly. I never was so tired as I was at the end of each day, as I was at the roofing mill.

It was such a dirty place to work. Dust was in the air constantly. The language that the workers used was just unbelievable. They cursed constantly and were always talking about sex. This little farm boy sure got an education.

I earned thirty dollars a week. I was able to save enough money to buy a 1934 Ford sedan. I bought it used from Ed Fitzer who worked at Joliet Ford Motor Co. on Jefferson Street. I remember brother Bernie borrowing it a lot when he was dating Marguerite Miller.

It was during this time that unions were becoming quite active, and sit-down strikes were

common. One of the workers tried to organize a union, and he was promptly fired.

About a year-and-a-half of working at this roofing mill, an old grade school buddy of mine, Burl Cleary, told me that they were hiring down at the P.F. Volland Greeting Card Co. in Joliet. There were openings in the art department. Needless to say, I was very interested to get a chance to work in an art department. That love for art was still actively bubbling in my veins.

I went down to 8 richards Street, was interviewed, and was hired. I was hired for $12.00 a week. I think now one can understand my love for art, when I would leave a thirty-dollar a week job to pursue and art career.

I have never regretted my decision. I worked at 8 Richards Street for 43 years, from 1937 to 1978, when I retired at age 65.

I just loved that job, and loved the people with whom I worked. Working there was like going from a dark room into one where there was light. These people were so kind, sincere, friendly, and so refined, not crude and filthy like those at the roofing plant. Their conversations and language were so different. I felt like I was in another world.

The art director (Mildred Guerin) was such a wonderful, caring and kind person. There were about five of us young artists who had to learn how to draw what was required in the making of a greeting card. We had to learn just what was a good drawing for reproduction. I'll never forget her. I learned so much from her, as did the rest of the young artists.

THE GERLACH BARKLOW BUILDING

At 8 Richards Street was the Gerlach Barklow Company which manufactured calendars. It was a block long and three stories high. One could actually get lost in the building if he didn't know his way around. The calendar operation and manufacturing was the main-stay in the building.

To keep the printing presses busy during the off-season when calendars weren't being made, a greeting card company was added. This was the P.F. Volland Co. which originated in Chicago. I worked for the greeting card company.

For a greeting card to reach a retailer's shelves and sold to a customer, it goes through many phases.

It first has to be designed. Then working drawings are made in black and white. Separate drawings also have to be made for each color that the card has. These steps are all done in the art department.

All these drawings are then sent to be photographed. From the negatives of those photographs printing plates are made, a separate one for each color. These printing plates are then put on a printing press, as many plates as there are colors

The finished printed sheet is then embossed, then cut apart into individual cards, then folded and boxed. If the cards require any finishing, they go to the finishing department where ribbons glitter, etc., is put on. The cards are then stored in bins, from which the orders are gathered. They are then boxed and shipped.

This plant at 8 Richards Street had a work force of over one thousand people, and was one

I began in the art department, first learning how to make working drawings. I then designed cards, then later went into making color separations, later heading that department. There were about twently people working under me.

It was a very satisfying job. I loved every moment of it. I never hated to go to work. So many wonderful friends I made there, friends that I'll remember forever.

Through many changes in personnel over the years, I eventually ended up as art director. There were also so many, many management changes and company dissolvements. The original Gerlach Barklow Calendar Company was sold. The Volland Co. became a part of Rustcraft Greeting Card Co. in Boston, Massachusetts. Eventually, through mergers and poor management, the calendar company and greeting card company were no more. It was such a sad day for the "old-timers" to digest. It's so hard to realize how a big thriving business can be manipulated and, with mergers and tax write-offs, be no more.

51A

1962

1971

The Joliet Rust Craft Management Club will meet March 18 at the Colonial Steak House at 7 p.m. New officers for the year are Bert Ruettiger, president; Tony Granich, vice president; Beverlee Johnston, secretary; and Jim Patch, treasurer. The speaker will be Peter Donis, plant manager at Caterpillar Tractor Co. Slides of "Caterpillar Around the World" will be shown after which there will be a question-and-answer period.

COMMERCIAL ARTIST ADDRESS W.E.B. ART GROUP

By: Elaine J. Blohm

At a recent W.E.B. Art Society meeting held at the Grace Lutheran Church on Kahler Road, Bert Ruettiger, spoke on some of the aspects of art in its role as hobby, business or pleasure.

Ruettiger, who is a commercial artist for Vallen Greeting Card Company of Joliet, spoke on the behalf of Mr. Erickson of Manhatten who does picture framing for a lot of the area artists.

Ruettiger teaches adult night classes in oil painting at Joliet West High School.

a,j,c2/8

The Adult Education Program of the Joliet Township High Schools is adding four new courses for adults on a non-credit basis.

A course entitled "Art for Beginners" will be taught by Bert Ruettiger. Ruettiger has been engaged as a commercial artist for the past 25 years and is an employe of Rust Craft, formerly known as Gerlach-Barklow.

Art for Beginners is a basic course and is designed to help anyone interested in art. It is programmed to meet the needs of each student's desire. Many different phases will be covered, including the fundamentals of sketching, water colors, and oil painting. The course will also include show - card lettering. Each student will need to supply his own working materials. This class will be limited to 15 students. The starting date is Tuesday, Feb. 4 from 7-9 p.m. The class will meet for 10 weeks.

Ord 2531-

880

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States

Lambert Oliver Ruettiger
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

804 Bruth Ave. Joliet, Will. Ill.
(No. and street or R. F. D. No.) (City or town, county and State)

has been duly registered this 16 day of October, 19 40

Hazel Stutz
(Signature of registrant)

Registrar for 33 Joliet Will Ill.
(Precinct) (Ward) (City or county) (State)

BE ALERT { Keep in touch with your Local Board. Notify Local Board immediately of change of address.

CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES

D. S. S. Form 2

16—17105

Lambert Oliver Ruettiger (Registrant must sign here)

I GET MARRIED

I married Phyllis Block in 1941. She was a farm girl. I met her at a dance. Later on, I discovered that she, too, worked at Gerlach Barklow. We went together for two years. We used to go to shows, go out dancing, go out and eat, and we both enjoyed doing things together. We fell in love, and I proposed to her. She accepted my proposal, and we got married.

We were married at St. John's Catholic Church our attendants were Dorothy Block (Phyllis's sister) and my brother Bernard. Phyllis wore a beautiful wedding gown and made such a beautiful bride. Bernie and I wore white suits.

The reception was at Phyllis's mother's house on Rowell Avenue. There were a lot of friends of ours in attendance. After the reception, we drov up to the Wisconsin Dells to spend our honeymoon. We had a wonderful time up there, enjoying the beach and going on the boat ride that went up and down the Dells. I remember coming home with just enough money to purchase some hamburger meat.

WE PURCHASE A HOME

A couple of weeks before we got married, we purchased a little four-room bungalow at the end of Fourth Avenue. We paid $1750.00 for it, with $300.00 down and a monthly payment of $17.50. We bought it from a Mr. and Mrs. Meyers who lived next door. The house had no inside bathroom, but had an outside privy. Both Phyllis and I were used to those inconveniences, having both lived on a farm.

I remember how cute and livable Phyllis made our home. We purchased all our furniture from Leath's, charged it, and made monthly payments.

OUR LITTLE HOUSE ON 4TH AVE

The first week of our marriage, I suffered from an ingrown toenail. I went to my old family doctor, Dr. Steen. He cut and trimmed around the toe. The next day the area he worked on was all infected, and there was a red line going up my leg. Phyllis said "You are not going back to that doctor. I'll take you to my doctor, Dr. Kennedy."

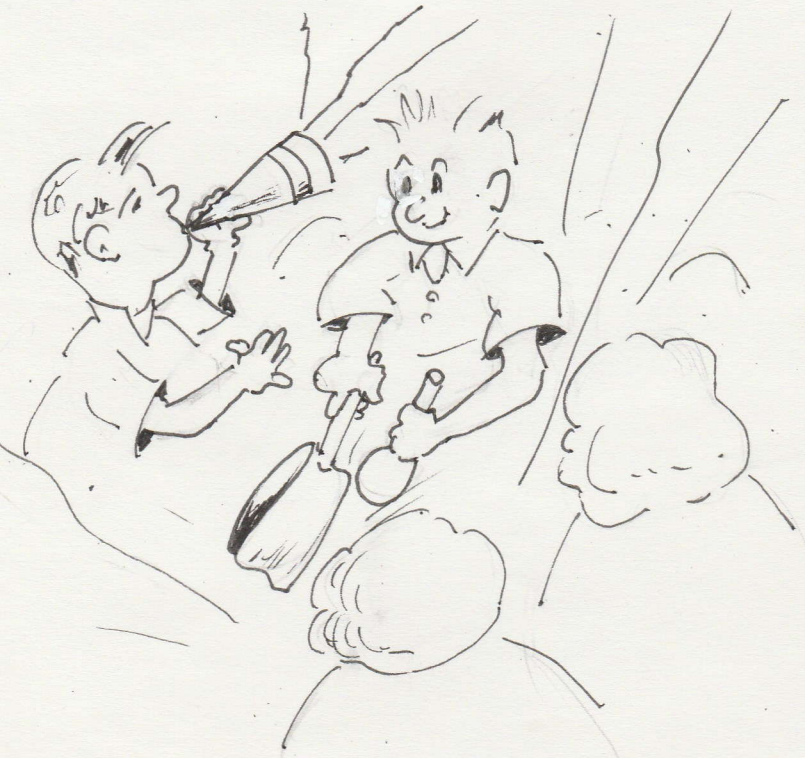
When he examined me, he said that I had blood poisoning, and immediately sent me up to St. Joseph's Hospital. I had to have surgery, and they removed the complete toenail. It was the big toe on my left side. Boy, did that ever hurt. They had my foot completely covered and packed in ice. I was at the hospital for ten days. What a way to start a marriage.

During the time I was at the hospital, Phyllis was asked by Madaline Glass to come back to work. I'll never forget Mrs. Glass's concern for us. She was concerned that we would have no funds while I was laid up.

SOAKING MY BIG TOE

After returning back from the hospital, one
ht a group of old friends came over to our
se and shivareed us. A shivaree is a mock
enade. The people who are doing this beat on
s and pans and blow horns at the place where
s newly married couple are staying. They con-
ue beating on the pots and pans until the
ried couple come out and give them some money
they can go and celebrate.

If I recall right, I gave them two dollars,
h which they purchased four-and-a-half gallons
beer for their enjoyment.



PHYLLIS BECOMES PREGNANT

One evening we had friends over for a visit. Phyllis served peaches and cake for dessert. During the evening, we drank beer.

The next morning Phyllis was deathly sick, terrible stomach cramps and throwing up. I called the doctor, and he came right out. Back in those days, the doctors made house calls.

Phyllis told the doctor her symptoms. I spoke up and told what we had eaten, and said it must be a reaction from combining the peaches and beer together.

He finished examining her. Then he had a big grin on his face. Then winking at me, he said, "It isn't the peaches and beer - Phyllis is pregnant."

We were very happy. We told Phyllis's Mom, and she too was very elated, as were Pa and Ma when we told them.

One year and a month after our marriage, we had our first child. I remember coming into the room where Phyllis was laying. We both smiled, and Phyllis said to me, "Dad, I bore you a son - that's what you wanted."

We named him Gerald Eugene. We nicknamed him Jerry. He brought us so much happiness. He was so cute. The only thing that we didn't like was that at night he would cry, cry, cry. Of course, we would go and pick him up. After we picked him up, he would stop crying. This went on for eighteen months.

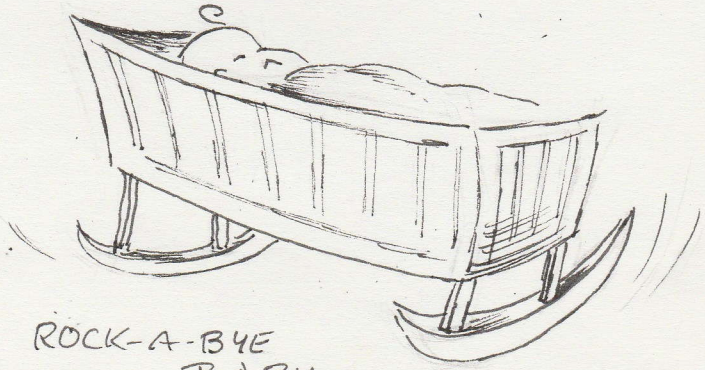
Our second son was born February 16, 1943. We named him Lawrence Oliver. He was a chubby

little baby. Either we just left Jerry cry because we had to take care of the new baby, or what. Anyhow, he stopped crying and started to sleep all night.

Two years after Larry was born, along came Thomas Wayne. We called him our little Christmas present because he was born on the 17th of December 1946. That made three sons.

Our fourth son, David Lee, was born in the fall of the year on October 9th, 1949. I recall we had a nice apple tree in our backyard. On this particular Sunday afternoon, I crawled up into the tree to pick some apples. Phyllis was beneath the tree, and I would drop the apples down to her. All of a sudden, she looked up at me and said, "Dad, you better come down and take me to the hospital.". Which I did, and David was born that evening.

Richard Scott arrived four years later, on February 20th, 1953. What a joy my family has been to me, and how good God has been, blessing me with five wonderful sons. I had a good, kind, and loving wife. She was a beautiful mother to her boys. God took her home in 1972 and left me with just memories and the five sons she gave me.



ROCK-A-BYE BABY

WE SELL OUR HOUSE

When the war came along, and even prior to the war, everyone had to register for the draft. It was in the form of a lottery. They drew numbers. Brother Bernie got an early number and had to go to service. I drew a number that put me way down on the list.

Not knowing when I would be called and having the fear of having to leave Phyllis and Jerry to raise alone, Phyllis's Mom suggested we move in with her, down on her farm, until the war was over.

My draft number came up twice, and the company had me deferred twice. The government didn't want to deplete all the industries' manpower, and, because so many were called from Gerlach Barklow, I was one of the fortunate ones who didn't get called.

It was nice living with Lizzie Block (Phyllis' Mom) and her sister Dorothy. I enjoyed the freedom of the farm and, of course, planted a garden and helped with the raising of chickens that Lizzie had.

We rented our house on Fourth Avenue to some hillbillies who came up from the south and got a job at the arsenal. Mr. and Mrs. Meyers (from whom we had bought the house) lived next door, and didn't like the way the house was deteriorating. They offered to re-purchase the house from us for what we had in it. We sold it back to them.

A couple years later, there was a house that had a little land that went up for sale on Rowell Avenue.

Phyllis and I went down and looked at it.

It was owned by Mrs. Jessie Goebel who recently had lost her husband. She was a very sweet person.

The house had two bedrooms, living and dining room, kitchen, and bath. On the land was a two-car garage, a small shed, and a chicken house. It also had a nice orchard with about ten apple trees, peach and plum and cherry, plus a nice grape arbor.

She asked $8500 for it. We offered her $7500, and she said okay. She told us that we seemed so nice that she wanted us to have it.

As the children came along, I had to do a lot of remodeling. I had to find rooms for the kiddos to sleep in. I had never done anything like this, and I really learned through my mistakes.

I built a bedroom at the end of the living room by putting up a wall, eliminating the dining room. We now had three bedrooms. When David and Ricky came along, with all the room used up downstairs, I went upstairs. I had to put in a new stairway and move the kitchen to the south, putting cabinets and countertops where the Goebels had their breakfast nook.

It took a lot of carpentry work upstairs, as up there it just had a floor through the center and exposed two-by-fours. I insulated, put plaster board on the sides and ceiling, and added a sliding glass window on the north end. I made two moveable beds and a counter across the north end, so the boys could study and do their homework. I made some cabinets along the two walls where they could store their toys and junk.

It was a long drawn-out project. It seemed that I was always building. Many times Phyllis would say to me, "Aren't you ever going to get done?" I couldn't blame her, because I had the house torn up so many times.

The upstairs was finally done, and Jerry and Larry moved up in there. Now, everyone had his own room.

I used to raise chickens to help put meat and eggs on the table. I would buy little chicks from the hatchery and raise them to two pounds. I would then dress them and put them in the freezer. Any excess eggs, I would sell down at work. I bought all the feed and there came a time when the money outgo was more than the incoming money, so I gave up raising chickens. I sold the old hens to a chicken man.

I tore down the chicken house, salvaged the lumber, and used it to make a four-car garage out of the two-car garage.

We got a lot of fruit from the trees, plus lots of grapes. Eventually, the fruit trees' life cycle was over and they died. They had to be cut down as they died. I often wondered what Mr. and Mrs. Goebel would say and think, if they could see their old home now. I'm sure they wouldn't recognize it.

I used to buy little Colorado blue spruce pine tree seedlings. I planted them all around the perimeter of our lot. They grew tall and sturdy and formed a beautiful setting in the backyard.

The raising of our boys was made so much

easier by where we lived. The boys had a place to roam and play. They were not confined like the kids in the city. Phyllis and I were so very fortunate, having them all turn out nice wonderful young men.

The boys all went to St. John's Catholic School and then to Catholic High. They had a good religious background.

The boys earned money passing the Spectator and cutting grass.

THE BOYS LOSE THEIR MOTHER

In the 60's, Phyllis had trouble with her arm - lots of discomfort and pain. The doctors, upon examining her, found a lump on the arm. They took a biopsy and had it analyzed at the hospital. When the report came back, they said it was cancerous. They then said that they were sending it to the state lab to have their findings verified. For three horror-filled days, I prayed and waited for their report. The doctor finally called and said the state's finding was negative - it was not cancerous.

I often wondered if, somehow, the state had made a mistake when they analyzed the biopsy, because of what happened later.

It was five or six years later, when she started to have terrible pains in her stomach. So many trips we took to different doctors. None could come up with an answer. One doctor had her go to the hospital. He wanted to take a biopsy of her liver. He inserted a needle and brought out a piece of her liver. The biopsy report that came back was negative.

The pain got so severe, that the doctors finally decided to operate.

The boys and I took her to St. Joseph's Hospital, where she was operated on by Dr. Frickey We all went down to the chapel and prayed, then spent agonizing hours waiting for the operation to be over with.

Finally Dr. Frickey called us, and we went into a room, and he told us to sit down. After we were all seated, he told us that her liver was completely covered with cancer. I recall so vividly him telling me, "Don't you doubt what I'm

waste of money."

What sad, sad news. I knew the way the doctor expressed it, that she had cancer, and that it was terminal.

I recall a priest from Catholic High, Father Rogge, who was a good friend of David, who came to the hospital constantly to try and comfort Phyllis and her family. I'll always remember him for his kindness and comforting words.

There were those days of worry for Phyllis. She was in constant pain, and used to swell up just terrible in her stomach, taking on water. Every three or four days, she had to go to the hospital or doctor to be "tapped" and have the fluid removed. They did this by making a small incision in her stomach wall. They then were able to drain the stomach cavity.

The doctors taught me how to give her shots which helped relieve her pain. I felt so sorry for her, and prayed and prayed for her. It was so pitiful to watch her suffer.

Against the doctors' wishes in Joliet, I decided to take her up to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. This was our second trip up there, as we went through the clinic about a year previous to this. At that time, they found nothing. It only goes to prove that they are not infallible at Mayo's

They decided to operate on her. After going through that ordeal again, they brought her back to intensive care. The doctor came to me, and

with his head bowed down in a sympathetic voice said, "We opened her up, and her whole insides are full of cancer. There is absolutely nothing we can do for her. We just closed the incision."

While she was in intensive care, one could see her for only five minutes every hour. She looked so helpless lying there. Occasionally, she would open her eyes and try to smile. I felt so sorry for her.

David flew up to Mayo's to be with me. I was so happy that he came. She gradually got worse, so I told all the boys that, if they wanted to see their mother before she passed away, they better come right away. We were all together when the Lord took her away. I was so happy that Jerry and Elaine flew in from California and saw her before she died.

She suffered so much, and it was a blessing that God called her home. Her body was flown back to Joliet. Dames Funeral Home took care of her funeral arrangements. Her remains now rest in St. John's Cemetery.

She was a good wife and mother. Her memory will stay with me forever. It took time to ease the pain and her loss. I made up my mind that I had to accept her passing and let time heal the wound.

I tried to keep myself busy, doing something every waking hour. I started to paint houses, both inside and outside. I wallpapered, cut grass - just anything to keep my body and mind occupied.

Only those who have gone through a similar loss will ever know what it is like until, they,

too, someday experience the loss of a loved one.

I'll never forget the first Thanksgiving after Phyllis passed away. I told the boys that I was going to get a turkey and have a turkey dinner. I bought the turkey and bought dressing. I put the dressing into the turkey's cavity, then put it in the oven and waited. I checked the meat on and off until I thought it was done. I first took out the dressing, and it came out just like it was when I put it in. I had failed to moisten it - Mistake Number One. I then went to slice a piece of white meat from the breast. I cut into something plastic. I reached in and pulled out the gizzard, heart, and liver still in its plastic bag - Mistake Number Two. Of course, we all laughed, and I learned a good lesson that Thanksgiving.

Jerry, being the oldest, was a good student both in grade school and high school. I remember one day he was down visiting with Grandma Block. We got a telephone call from Grandma, saying Jerry had an accident. I hurried down in the car. Jerry's mouth was bleeding. Grandma told me that Jerry was standing on top of the piano bench and jumped off. He must have had his mouth open with his tongue out, because when he landed, his teeth went through his tongue.

Of course, I rushed him to the Silver Cross emergency room at the hospital. The doctor looked at the cut in his tongue. It was about half bitten in two. He told me to stand on one side of the table Jerry was laying on and hold him tight so he wouldn't move. He told the nurse to do the same on the other side. He proceeded to put three stitches in his tongue. I can still see that curved needle being put through his tongue. I felt just as much pain as Jerry did. I felt so sorry for the little guy. The doctor told me to get some aspirin gum and have Jerry chew it. It seemed to ease his pain. I think the stitches came out about 3 or 4 days later in the gum he was chewing.

I also remember Jerry passing the Spectator paper and cutting grass down in Sugar Creek. When he was older and able to drive a car, one day he was out with a Studebaker car that I had bought from Jack Young.

We received a call from Jerry saying he was

in an accident by Jim Stewart's grocery store. I asked him if he was hurt. He said no. I rushed down in the car and, as I came over the rise on Richards Street, I saw a large crowd of people around two cars which were in the center of the street.

Both claimed they were on their side of the street, but they hit each other in the middle of the street. The police issued no tickets, as they said both were at fault. The only thing I worried about was that Jerry wasn't hurt. To my knowledge, that was Jerry's first and last accident.

Jerry met a sweet girl, Elaine Lipinski, whom both Phyllis and I loved, and I still do. They fell in love and set their date to be married. I had bought a 1929 Model A Ford in 1942, and Phyllis and I thought it would be a neat idea if we cleaned up the Model A and had it waiting when they came out of church.

To both Jerry and Elaine's surprise, it was all decked out with a "just married" sign on the back, plus a string of cans. It was a beautiful wedding and reception. 5-7-66

Our first born had left the nest.

LARRY

Larry, our second son, was a fat chubby little rascal when he was born. He was a joy to both his mother and me. I vividly recall that, when we brought Larry home from the hospital, Jerry's midnight crying seemed to stop. Perhaps our attention was now on our new bundle of joy, and we didn't pick Jerry up at each whimper and sob.

Larry and Jerry got along good together. I remember one Easter that we bought each one of them a little duckling. They named them Ike and Mike. It was fun seeing them following each other around.

Larry, as he grew up, most liked the outdoors. When he was old enough, he had a B-B gun, then later on a shotgun. He loved to hunt rabbits and pheasants.

I recall one day, when his Mom and I were entertaining someone downstairs, Larry happened to be upstairs. We heard a loud bang. It sounded like a shot. I quickly ran upstairs and there was Larry, white as a ghost, with the shotgun still in his hands. He said he was cleaning the gun and thought the gun wasn't loaded. Luckily, the shot went into his bed, through the mattress, and into the boxspring. It was so scary. Thank God that he wasn't hurt.

Larry attended St. John's Catholic Grade School, and he and Jerry rode the bus to and from school. He went to Catholic High and, when he graduated, we wanted him to attend Joliet Junior College as Jerry had done. He said that he had had enough of going to school and didn't want to go. We told him to at least try it and, if he didn't care to continue going, his Mom and I said we would agree forhim to quit.

He went to J.J.C. for about three months when one day he came home and told us that he had joined the Marines.

I'll never forget the day he went off to boot camp. Mom and I went down with him to the train station to say our goodbyes. The train pulled in, and I said to him, "I'll walk with you to the train." He said, "No, Dad, I'd rather you didn't." Our second son had grown up.

We kept close touch with him through letters and phone calls until finally he went to Vietnam. Many teary nights, we watched on T.V., as the Vietnam War was brought home to everyone in their living rooms. We prayed that he would return safely home to us.

God answered our prayers. He came home, met Marilyn Brnca, a sweet and lovely girl, and got married. 6-3-67

Our second son had left the nest.

TOMMY

Our Christmas gift in 1946 was Tommy. He was our third son, a mischievous little guy who always got into Mom's cupboards and played with her pots and pans.

I can remember that he had a fascination of playing with toy soldiers. He invented a rubber band gun, and would set the toy soldiers up, then shoot them down. Jerry, Larry, and he had lots of rubber band battles with their toy soldiers.

One day I was going to repair some large cement cracks where our well area was. I bought some tar that had to be heated so it could be used. After getting this solid tar to a pouring stage, which was real hot, I started to pour it into these large cracks. Tommy came out of the house and asked me what I was doing. Then, like a curious child, he put his hand into this hot tar. Of course, he screamed, then tried to get this hot tar off his fingers by wiping it on his ear. Of course, his fingers and ear were burned from the tar. When his Mom and I tried to remove the tar, the skin in those places came off with the tar. Like that old saying goes, "Curiosity got the best of him."

Tom was a good student in school. Schooling seemed to come easy for him.

Tom was still single when I left 1916 S. Rowell Avenue. So, instead of his leaving the nest, it was I when I married "my love" Mary Agnes, and left.

Tom later found a lovely girl, Rhonda McCormick, who had a son Patrick. They were married February 3rd, 1979. She was beautiful in her bridal outfit. Tom, Rhonda, and Patrick

reside at the old homestead on Rowell Avenue. Tom adopted Patrick, so now he carries the Ruettiger name.

Phyllis when she and the new baby came home from the hospital. She was always needed to corral and take care of Jerry, Larry, and Tommy.

I remember one day when I was going somewhere, and David wanted to go along. He crawled into the back seat and said he'd behave and cause no trouble. I had a four-door Plymouth at the time. The back doors on that year's model opened towards the back instead of towards the front, as they do on all present-day four-door cars.

As we rode along, unbeknown to me, David had his hand on the door handle and, all of a sudden, the door swung open, and little David fell out of the car and hit his head on a big rock that was alongside the road. I stopped the car and ran back to where he was lying. On the top of his head, the skin was severed and lying open. I picked him up, had him on my lap, and I'll never know how I drove on home.

Phyllis screamed when she saw him. We rushed him to the hospital, where the doctor put eighteen stitches in his scalp. Both of us felt so sorry to see the little tyke lying there and the doctor putting the needle into his scalp as he sewed up the wound.

David was very involved in high school in the Sea Explorers. The boys in the group were very nice, and Phyllis and I attended many of their meetings. They went on many trips and outings.

In the 60's, David had to do his "thing",

going over to Europe with a knapsack on his back. We worried about him more than he'll ever know, but he returned safe and sound.

He also spent two years in the Carmelite Seminary in Buffalo, New York. He found it wasn't his calling.

David married Diana Gerharz, a cute little redhead, on May 27th, 1978. They were married on a farm out in Manhattan, Illinois. It was a lovely wedding, performed beneath a group of trees. Diana made a very pretty bride.

DAVID & DI ARE MARRIED

kitchen and having a coffee can with nails in it setting by the upstairs steps. Ricky came down from the steps and fell. He put his hand out to stop his fall, and his hand lit on top of the coffee can's sharp edge. It cut his hand severely. It required three stitches to close the wound.

It seemed all the boys, at one time or another, had "something" happen to them. This had to be Rick's.

Rick liked school and was a very good student getting good grades all through grade and high schools.

In high school Rick loved to play chess, and at home he and Tom got in many enjoyable games.

When Ricky graduated from high school, he wanted so badly to go to Bradley University down in Peoria. He wanted to be an engineer. He was able to get a partial scholarship, and his Mother and I sent him there.

He had just begun the first few weeks at college, when his mother was getting very ill with her bout with cancer. I took her up to Mayo's where she was operated on and eventually passed away.

All of the boys were with me the night she died and were able to see her alive the day before.

I always felt so sorry for Rick, not having a mother's love as long as the rest of the boys did. But he turned out a beautiful young man. I am very proud of every one of my boys. I love them dearly and thank God for giving them to me.

I'll always remember Phyllis. She was a wonderful mother to all the boys. I'm sure God has a special place for her in heaven.

THANKS, MOM,
FOR GIVING ME
5 WONDERFUL SONS
I LOVE YOU
Dad

After five lonely years, I found someone to share the rest of my life with. Brother Leo and Leona stopped by one Sunday with Mary Agnes Murphy. I was home and invited them in. The seed was sown by Leo and Leona, so it wasn't long after that we started to date. I knew Mary Agnes from St. Bernard's Grade School which we both had attended. I had watched her dance the Irish jig many, many times on St. Patrick's Day at St. Bernard's annual St. Patrick's Day celebration.

She, too, like I, had lost her first love, also with cancer. I had known her husband Jack, who was a wonderful person. They had adopted two lovely children - a boy, Tom, and a girl, Kathleen. I was kidded a lot by Tom when I was dating Mary Agnes, his mother.

One Saturday Mary Agnes and I drove down to the Covered Bridge Festival in Indiana. When we returned home, Tom accused me of taking his mother across the state line which, according to him, was a federal offense. He is a great kidder.

We fell in love, Mary Agnes and I, and I gave her a diamond on Christmas Day 1976 at Jerry and Elaine's.

She had met Larry, Thomas, David, and Ricky, but she hadn't met Jerry. So I asked her if she'd go with me out to California to meet Jerry and Elaine. She said yes, so we flew to San Francisco, where Jerry and Elaine met us. We stayed three days in "Frisco, seeing all the sights, and Mary Agnes got to know Jerry and Elaine.

We were married April 2, 1977. Our wedding, as anyone who attended it will say, was entirely

different from any other wedding. We were married at St. Mary Magdalene Church. Brother Leo was my attendant, and sister Leona was Mary Agnes's.

During the ceremony, Father Sloan brought out a shotgun from beneath the altar and said, "Tom gave me this shotgun." Of course, everyone laughed. It was so funny, and it was done in good taste.

We had a nice reception in the church hall with nice hors d'oeuvres and champagne. We even had "The Strollers" who played and sang.

We did not send out any invitations, but the church was just full of our friends and relatives We were a happy couple, seeing that so many cared enough to attend.

We spent the evening at the Holiday Inn near O'Hare Airport, and in the morning their shuttle bus took us to the airport where we flew to Vegas. We stayed at the MGM Hotel and, in the middle of the week, five couples came out to help us spend our honeymoon. Every year we go back to Vegas at Easter time, and some of the original couple also return, as do others.

I left the house on Rowell Avenue and moved to Washington Street into Mary Agnes's home. We were both still working, and when I became 65 I retired, which was in January of 1978. 'Lv" retired in November 1979 from Joliet Township Central High School.

tear down the old cottage and put up a small home and move down to Minooka.

The decision was made, and I started on the project of dismantling the old cottage. Jack helped me so much, as the Murphys lived in Minooka. He loved to come down and help his new Grandpa. Along with the Ruettiger boys, Tom Murphy, and a few others, the old cottage was finally no more. I did leave standing the old screened-in porch and used it to store the useable wood that I salvaged. We got a hold of a contractor to put up the framing. I intended to do the roofing, the rest of the exterior, and all of the interior. I got the roof roofed in the fall of the year, then left it as we intended to go to a warmer climate for the winter.

OUR LITTLE LOG CABIN

they had just bought. Of course, we said yes. We cancelled the one in Florida and packed up our little Datsun and headed west.

We arrived at Palace Gardens (themmobile home park) and Bob and Mickey's mobile, and loved it immediately.

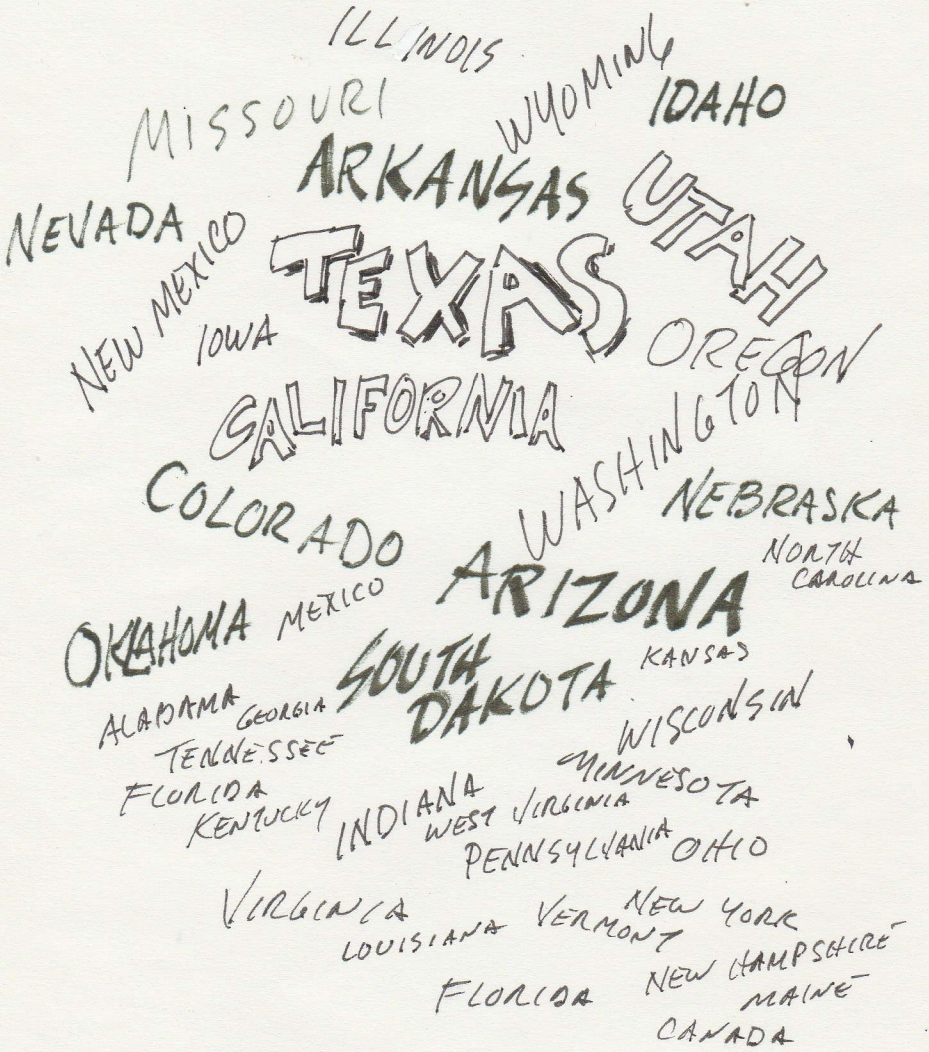
We enjoyed our first year in California, met a lot of new friends, and became real Californians. I even started a sketching class down at the club house.

We stayed from November until May, then returned to Minooka and continued the building of our new home. We decided to make it like a log cabin, putting that type of siding on the exterior. We had a lot of help from friends and family, and finally it was finished enough that Mary Ag put her house up for sale, and we moved into our new little love nest.

Mary Ag and I have driven across the country from Minooka to Chula Vista, California, eight times. We have seen so many, many wonderful places and visited just about everything that we cared to along the way.

Belonging to the Chicago Motor Club, we received maps and books that let us know what was interesting to see and visit. We never hurried, always taking our time and enjoying and taking in all that the good old U.S. has to offer. We've seen the rangelands of Texas with its cattle, the oil wells in the Perminion Basin, the deserts and

the mountains in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, California, and up north in Washington. We've crossed the "Great Divide" and the Continental Divide. We've visited lots of museums and Indian reservations. We've used every interstate across the country from U.S. 90, 80, 70, 40, 20, and 10.



OUR TRAVEL PROBLEMS

One year coming back in May, we were marooned for two days in Eness, Montana, on account of a snow storm. Another year, coming out in November we ran into an ice storm through Midland, Texas. So we have had a few discomforts along the way, like the time the heater hose broke, and we lost our water. Luckily, we were at a 7-11 in Alberquerque and, through a young Spanish man, were able to get it fixed through a truck stop.

We've driven across the country eight times and put 145,000 miles on the Datsun. It has been a faithful and wonderful car, never once giving us any major problems.

WE WERE MAROONED IN ENESS, MONTANA.

WE BUY OUR OWN MOBILE

After staying at Bob and Mickey's mobile for four years, then finally retired and wanting to spend the winters in California, we decided to look for our own mobile.

We put the word out, and Jose Garcia heard that a mobile was going to be sold. It seemed that with the occupants - the man was in the Navy and was going to be transferred. "Lv" went to see it. I was sick at the time with the flu. The people hadn't even put up a "for sale" sign when "Lv" looked at it. He wanted $9000, she offered $8500, and he said okay. She said my husband will have to see it first. The next day I looked at it and we decided to buy it. We bought it January 24th, 1983.

After the deal was finished, Tom and Judy Palmer moved out. We ripped up the old carpet and bought a new one at Sid's Carpet Place. Also, a new bedspring and mattress. Friends gave us different items to get started. We went to swap meets and yard sales, and slowly furnished the mobile. We picked up a lot of things at the Elks Club.

We now had our second home. I planted a little garden in the back of the mobile, plus flowers and bushes. We bought a T.V.. and Kathy bought us a stereo. As time went on, we upgraded, getting better things and buying new ones. We have become well-situated with liveable accessories both in Minooka and California.

We really enjoy living in our mobile and the area in Chula Vista. It's very accessible to churches, shopping areas, and post office. It is so funny, and we are so fortunate, that when we are in California, we don't yearn for Minooka, and vice-versa when we are back in Minooka.

82A

1982

Mary Agnes Ruettiger of Joliet is walking on air these days. Her lifelong wish was granted recently when she danced with the incomparable band leader, **Lawrence Welk**, who is soon to retire. Mary Agnes and her husband, **Bert**, attended a dress rehearsal of Welk's weekly show. It was while **Myron Florian** played the "Norwegian Polka" that Lawrence asked for a partner. Mary Agnes volunteered and was accepted. "It was a thrill of a lifetime, especially after Welk said I was a fantastic dancer," she explained to her family. He asked where she was from and after learning her name, asked about her husband. Bert was invited to stand and was introduced. The show had a Hawaiian theme and was scheduled to be televised this month.

The tickets for the rehearsal were obtained by their son and daughter, **Jerry** and **Elaine Ruettiger**, who live in Fullerton, Calif. The tickets were a birthday present for the Joliet couple. Mary Agnes retired three years ago from Joliet Central High School where she long had served as a secretary. Her son, **Thomas Murphy**, was principal at Central and resigned to accept a principalship at Redmond High School in Redmond, Wash. Mary Agnes and Bert spend their winters in Chula Vista, Calif. Bert was a commercial artist for Rustcraft Greeting Cards for more than 40 years prior to his retirement. He is doing freelance painting these days. The Ruettigers have sons involved in the arts. **David** owns Jose O'Kain Costume and Theater Shop on West Jefferson Street. **Gerald** (Jerry) is a design-engineer for Disney Productions in California.

MARY AGNES AND I

My life with Mary Agnes has been a very happy one. We are very compatible and enjoy doing things together. We both haved filled that "void" in our lives by finding one another. We now have someone to share our lives with. Our love has grown stronger everyday.

We are so happy and fortunate that both of our families have accepted both of us and one another.

The years have taught us that life is so, so short, that time is so precious, and that love is needed, and needed to be shared.

We thank God that we have each other to share these last remaining years.

We thank our families for being so good to us, and hope that they will think of us just once in a while after we are gone, and remember us as ones who loved each and every one of them.

Lv,
Thanks, Sweetheart for all your understanding and love through our married life.
You have made a lonely life worth living again.
I love you
Lv

93A

SOME THINGS I REMEMBER

THE WOOD BURNING STOVE
BOTH HEATING AND COOKING

THE CRYSTAL RADIO

RUGS
AND RUG BEATERS

CURTIAN STRETCHERS

ICE TONGS
ICE BOX

HORSE AND BUGGY

HOME MADE BREAD

KEROSENE LAMPS

WASH BOARD
WASH TUBS

FLAT IRONS

MILK BOTTLES

STARCHED CUFFS
AND COLLARS

LYE SOAP
AMERICAN FAMILY

WATKINS PRODUCTS

THE MODEL "T"
AND MODEL "A"

CARPET SWEEPER

LINOLEUM
PAINTED FLOORS

COUNTRY STORE

THE CISTERN

THE STOCKER

JACKS

HAND PUMPS TO PUMP YOUR DRINKING WATER

MARBLES

HOP SCOTCH

ANDY I OVER
RUN SHEEP RUN
HIDE-N-SEEK